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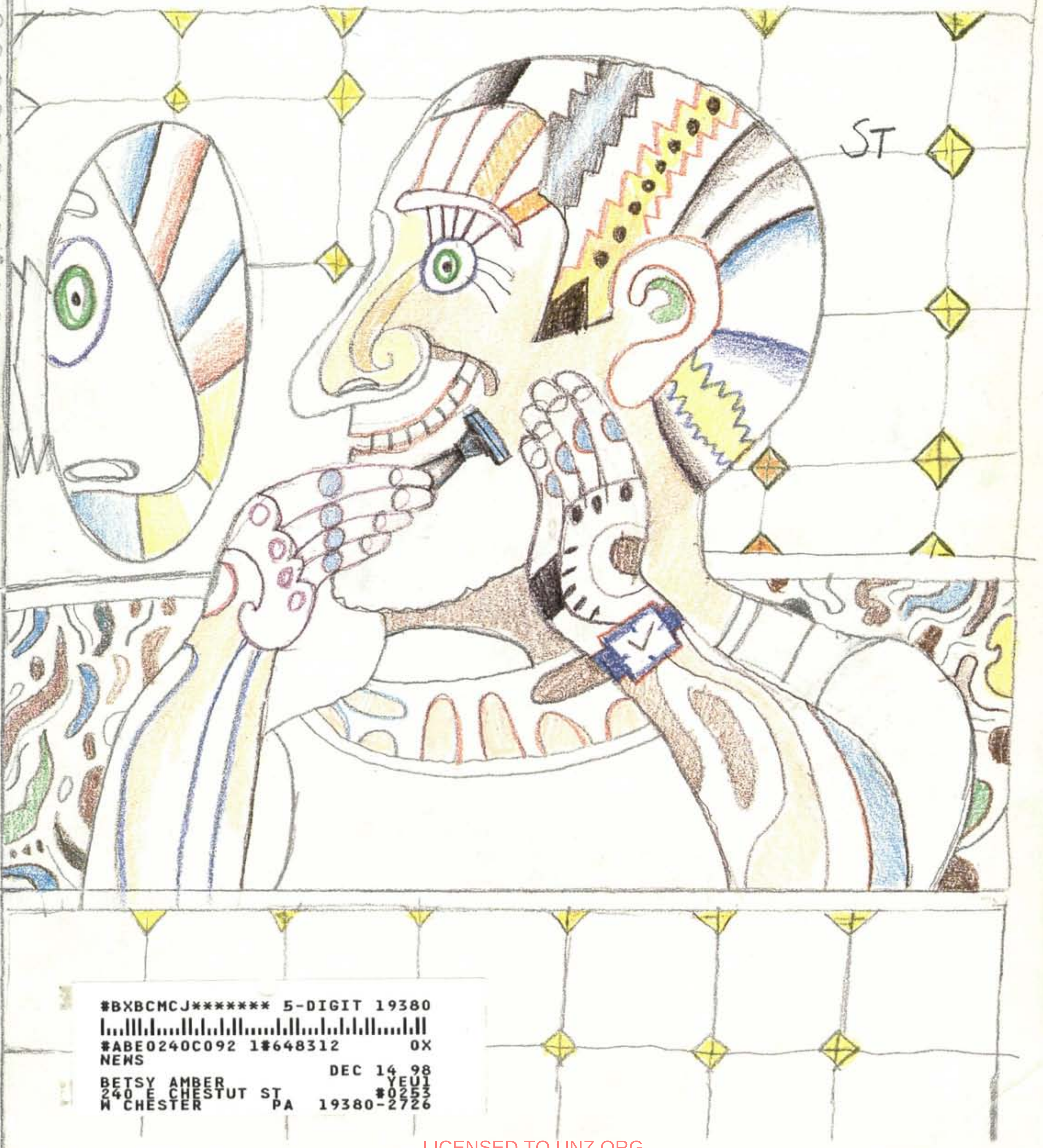

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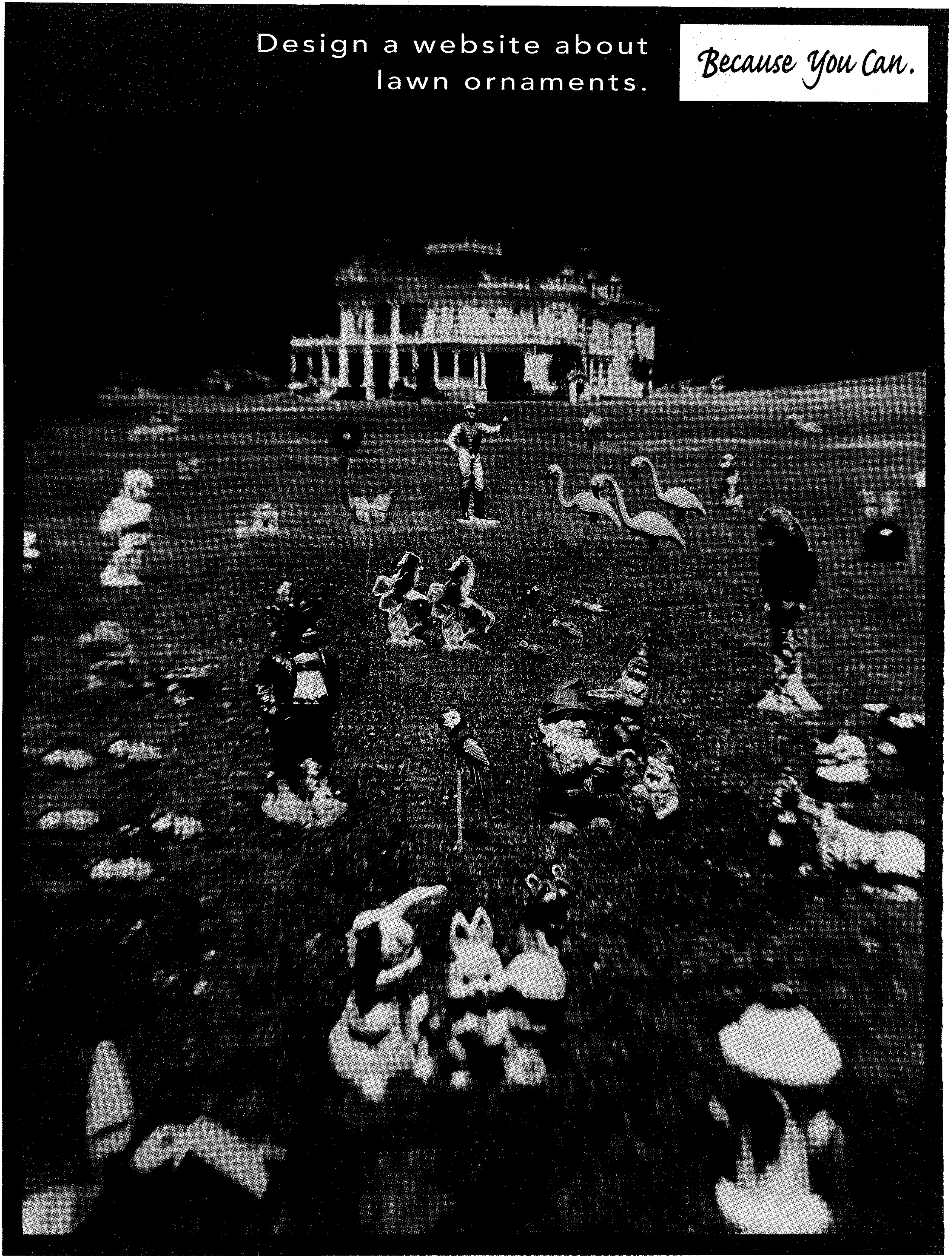
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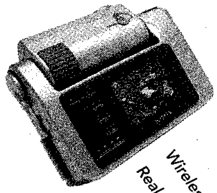

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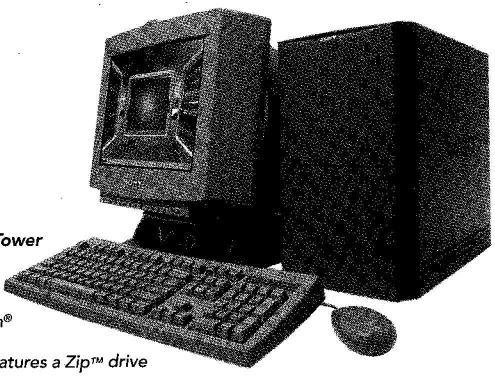

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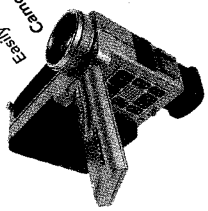

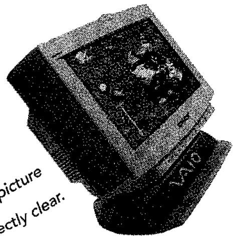

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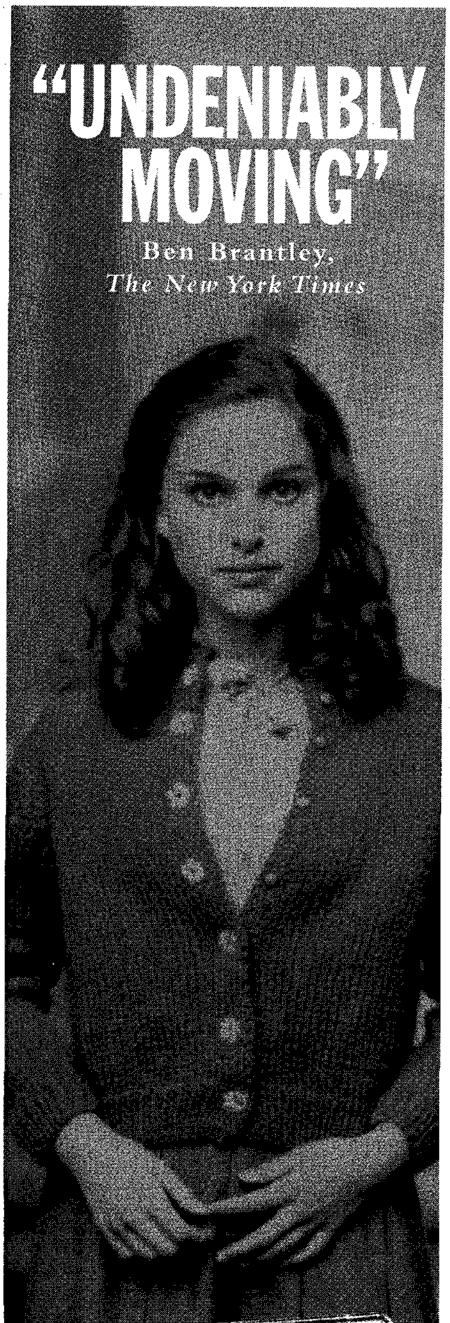

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Ben Brantley,
The New York Times

THE DIARY OF
Anne Frank

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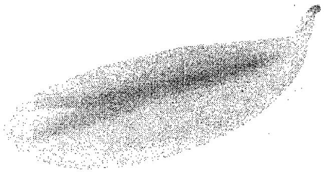

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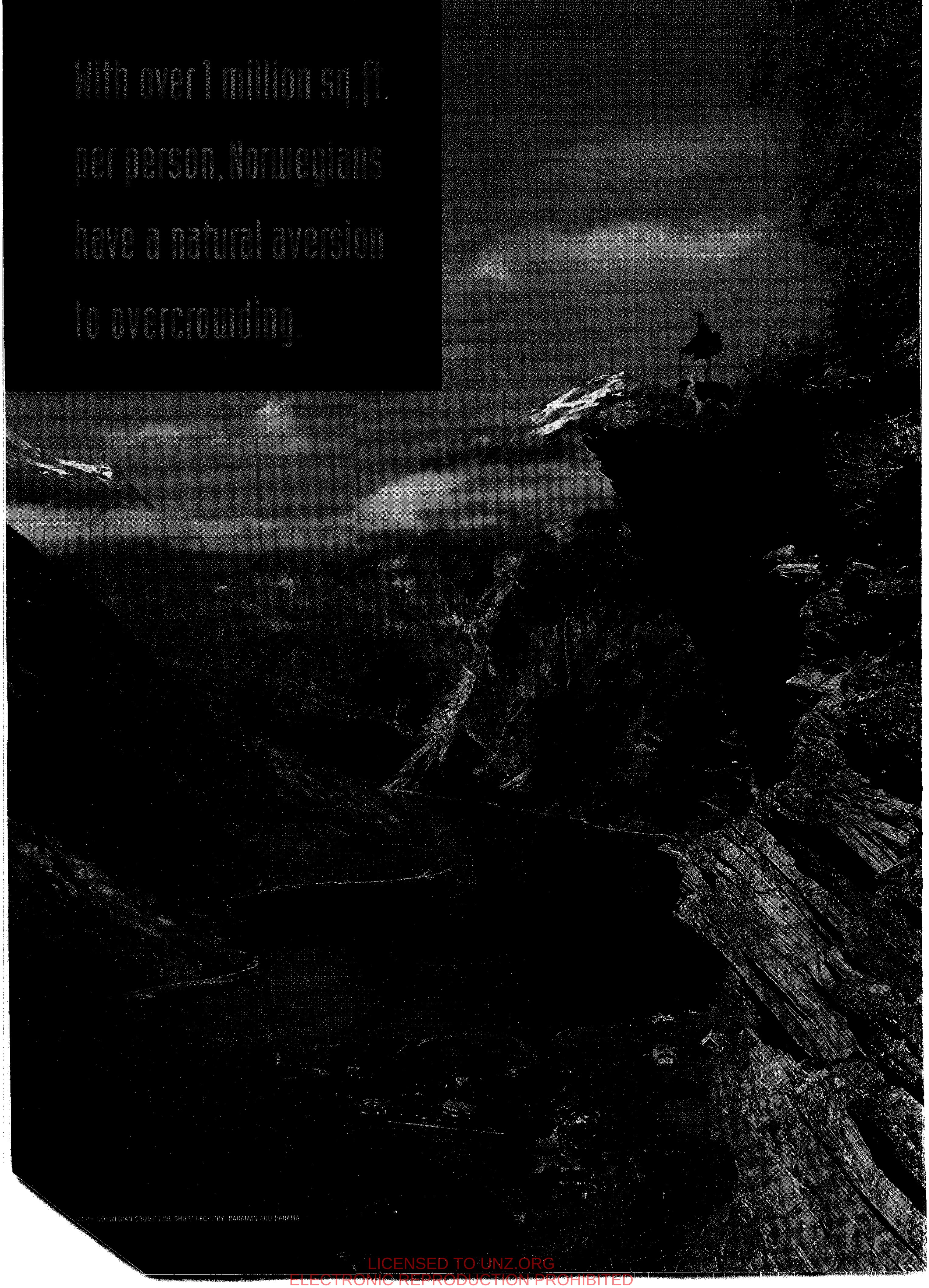
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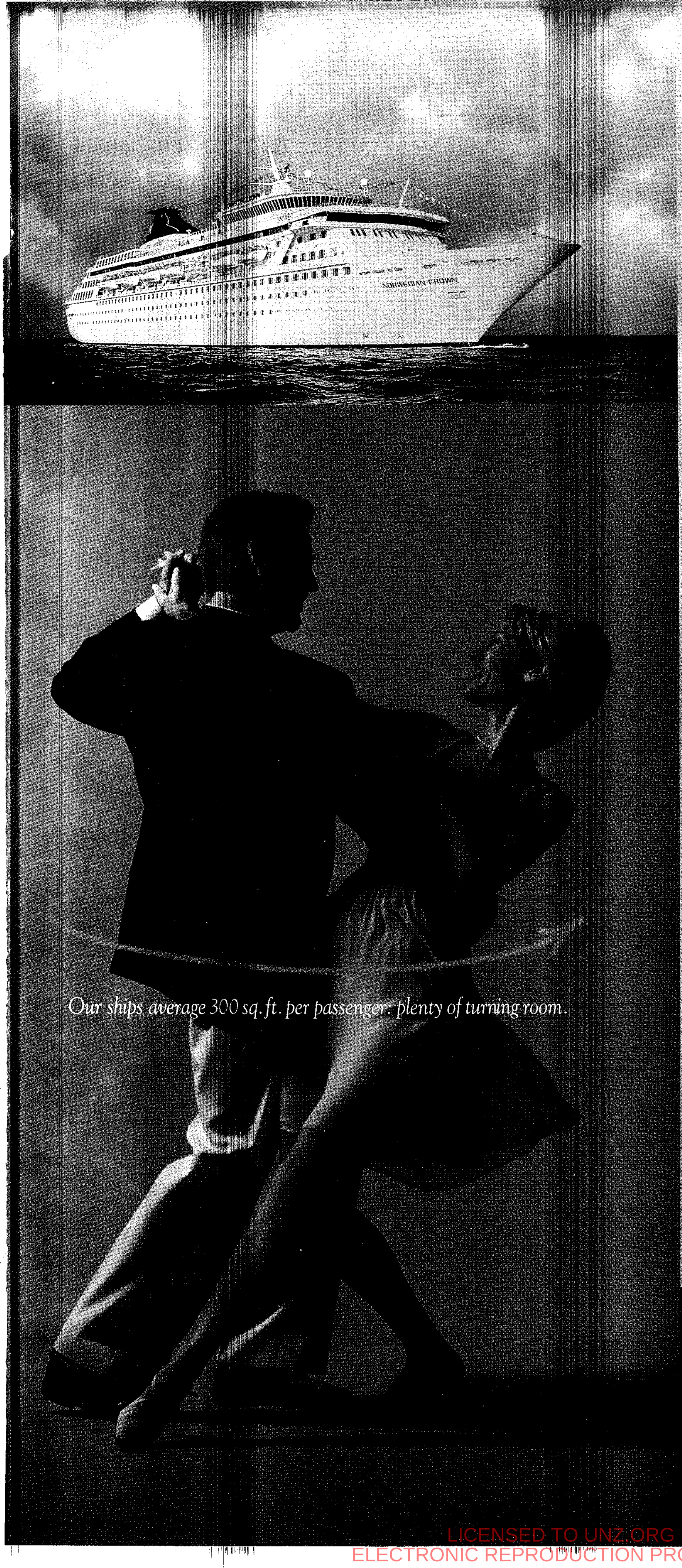
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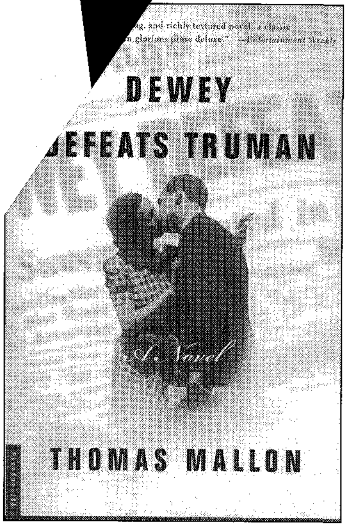
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COMMENT

THE PLOT THINS

The Oklahoma City conspiracy that wasn't.

THE American militia movement, it seems, is owed an apology. One of the more exhaustively demonstrated facts to have come out of the trials of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols is that, initial appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the militias had nothing to do with the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, on April 19, 1995. Indeed, there was no concrete involvement in the bombing on the part of anything that could accurately be described as an organized political or ideological entity.

This is very far from the impression that was conveyed to the public at the start. Only ninety minutes passed between the bombing in Oklahoma City and the initial arrest of McVeigh, but that was time enough for the conspiracy industry to get up to speed. First, the television sages laid the bombing at the door of Islamic militants. Then, after McVeigh's capture, the country was admonished that such an enormous atrocity could hardly have been pulled off by one or two men, and that it almost certainly had to be the work of one or more of the right-wing militias whose political views McVeigh found simpatico. The whole thing, we were told in a refrain that has become routine after such acts of horror, had to be a conspiracy.

The notion that organized, malevolent forces are at the root of every new public tragedy has become irresistible ever since the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The larger the event, it seems, the greater the demand for a commensurately grand conspiracy. The idea of conspiracy is, paradoxically, comforting: it provides meaning where there would otherwise be only irrationality and nihilism. And it's not as if there had been any shortage of real conspiracies and real coverups over the past generation or so: Watergate and Vietnam still linger. More recently, the explosion of news outlets—in print, broadcast, on cable, and, of course, on the conspiracy-friendly Internet—has generated an unending demand for explanations of the catastrophes and crimes of the moment. Reporters have learned to monitor themselves closely for signs of naïveté and gullibility. Besides, no one gets a movie deal for buying the government line. For Hollywood (and not just Oliver Stone), few story ideas are as unsexy as a single criminal acting alone. Conspiracies provide zingier plot points and splashier action sequences.

No event in recent American history

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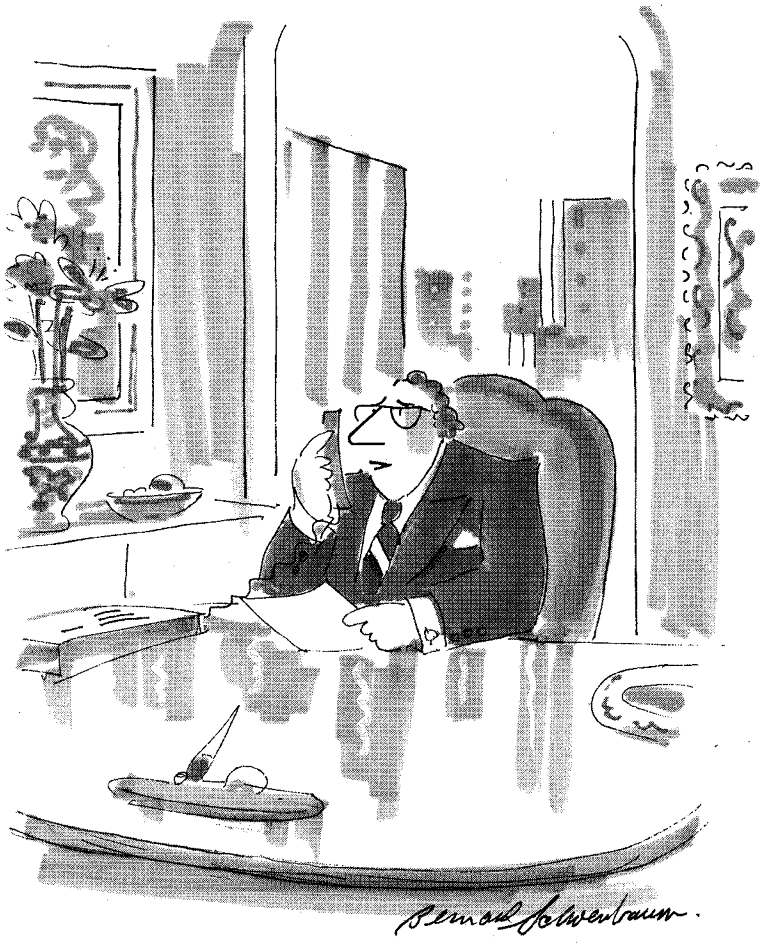
has seemed more rich with conspiratorial possibilities than the Oklahoma City bombing. The scale of the disaster—a hundred and sixty-eight people killed, hundreds more injured, a building demolished—exceeded that of any previous act of terrorism on American soil. But a curious thing happened during the federal trials of McVeigh and Nichols, before Judge Richard P. Matsch, in Denver. It turned out that there was no conspiracy—at least, not one that involved anyone beyond Nichols, McVeigh, and their friends Michael and, more distantly, Lori Fortier. Lawyers for both defendants tried hard to show that the bombing was the product of a large-scale operation in which their clients played small, or even nonexistent, roles. But they succeeded only in showing that both men held political views in line with the militias and shared a sense of outrage over the F.B.I.'s raid on the Branch Davidian Compound, two years earlier. Neither McVeigh nor Nichols belonged to any militia, and the trials turned up no concrete links between any militias and the bombing. The more carefully one looked at this conspiracy, the smaller it became.

Consider, for example, a mundane prepaid calling-card account that McVeigh and Nichols used on their cross-country hunt for bomb ingredients. If there had been other conspirators, their numbers would certainly have shown up on the bills, but it turned out that the two men mostly called each other. Nichols's life was a catalogue of failure. He was a flop as a farmer, a real-estate salesman, and soldier, and also as a husband—first to an American woman five years his senior and then to a Filipina mail-order bride eighteen years his junior. "The young ones are easier to train," Nichols told his second wife, who was seventeen when they married. Both wives proved to be incriminating witnesses against Nichols at his trial, but their acknowledgment of McVeigh's strong influence over Nichols may have contributed to the jury's peculiar verdict in that trial. Nichols was found guilty of conspiracy to commit the bombing—by which the jury meant nothing to do with militias but merely that Nichols had cooperated with McVeigh—and guilty also of involuntary manslaughter in the deaths of the eight federal agents in the building. In other words, the jury was apparently saying that Nichols intentionally planned to kill the agents and then did so accidentally. This oddly contradictory compromise verdict seemed designed to show that the jury recognized Nichols as having played a lesser role in the bombing than McVeigh played—an assessment that accords with the evidence.

But, even if McVeigh emerged from the testimony as a larger figure than Nichols, he, too, lingers in the memory as a paranoid loser. According to Nichols's former boss, McVeigh became convinced that the government had "implanted a chip into him that monitored his whereabouts." (Nichols apparently believed this, too.) Michael Fortier, an Army friend, testified that he had been urged by McVeigh to leave his wife and join McVeigh in the bomb plot. They could live, McVeigh said, like "a couple of desperadoes." Fortier declined. Anyhow, he and his wife—the Cheech and Chong of the story—may have been too strung-out on crystal meth to be of much help. Nichols, however, did sign up for the trip, and the greater part of the two trials consisted of the government's meticulous reconstruction of their travels. McVeigh and Nichols covered hundreds of miles in Kansas, Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, and, ultimately, Oklahoma as they assembled the fertilizer, fuel oil, and blasting caps needed for the bomb.

There is, in the end, an element of wishful thinking in the thirst for a broader conspiracy to explain the Oklahoma City bombing. During the years since the Kennedy assassination, it has become ever easier for handfuls of crazed outsiders to wreak havoc on the world. McVeigh and Nichols are excellent cases in point. They were determined but were not especially knowledgeable or skillful. They assembled most of the ingredients for their bomb without breaking any laws. It is ridiculously easy to buy ammonium-nitrate fertilizer and racing fuel and then to rent a truck—just as in Lee Harvey Oswald's day it was ridiculously easy to buy a mail-order rifle. The main reason that McVeigh and Nichols didn't get help was that they didn't need it. What is striking about acts of this magnitude is not how difficult they are but how simple. And that, as we consider the possible heirs to McVeigh and Nichols, is no comfort at all. —JEFFREY TOOBIN



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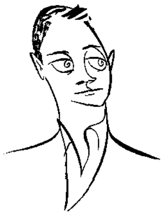

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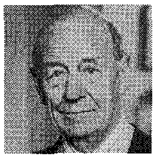

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THE MAIL

MILITANTS AND MONUMENTS

In "Egyptian Graffiti" (Comment, December 1st), Alexander Stille misunderstands the recent massacre by Islamic militants of fifty-eight tourists at the famous Pharaonic temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor when he writes that the site was chosen solely for its "extraordinary symbolic power." While it is true that the militants do not like what they consider to be pagan monuments, they targeted Luxor not for its "symbolic power" but because it was featured in the media the month before, when it hosted a star-studded performance of "Aïda." The attack had nothing to do with destroying icons and everything to do with killing tourists—something that the militants are just as happy to do on trains or in tour buses.

RICHARD ENGEL
Cairo, Egypt

SEX AND THE PRESIDENCY

Gore Vidal, in his review of Seymour Hersh's "Dark Side of Camelot" (Books, December 1st), asks, "Why do we still want to defend J.F.K.?" The answer is style, and how the style of this "amoral" couple (as Vidal described them) transformed the substance of their times. Just imagine a President like Nixon delivering that line about what you can do for your country. Our image of J.F.K. the President will remain largely intact, no matter what revelations about John F. Kennedy the man are forthcoming.

VALENTIN LYUBARSKY
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. Vidal wonders why we praise John F. Kennedy—a President who in thirty-four months committed his office to civil rights, inspired a generation of bright kids to pursue government service, coalesced the nation around the romance of space exploration, formulated Medicare, achieved a nuclear-test-ban treaty, enriched education and the arts, galvanized support for free trade, launched the Peace Corps, and coaxed Soviet missiles out of Cuba without a shot being fired. He may be no Snow White, but he makes his successors look like the Seven Dwarfs.

NEIL E. WEISFELD
Princeton, N.J.

For three decades, we as a nation were content with the Camelot version of John F. Kennedy. Now, it seems, we have chosen to amend that version to reflect our current obsession with sex and celebrities. Mr. Vidal makes a valiant effort to direct Americans' attention to what he believes should be our primary concern about government: where the money goes. For pop culture, though, the only real issue seems to be who can deliver the money shot.

GREG DOUGHERTY
Westport, Calif.

A SCIENTIFIC NOTATION

Richard Rhodes and several of the scientists he quoted in "Pathological Science" (December 1st) may be correct in their belief that the work of Stanley Prusiner, who recently won the Nobel Prize in Medicine for discovering "prions"—proteins that he believes cause mad-cow disease and other related diseases—is flawed. It's disappointing, however, that the article quotes Irving Langmuir's view that "pathological science" is characterized by "fantastic theories contrary to experience," because the same phrase could have been used to describe the early accounts of relativity and quantum mechanics. If Einstein, Bohr, or Heisenberg had not been able to shed classical physical theories, our understanding of the physical world would have remained highly constrained. Furthermore, even if there are errors in Prusiner's work, the strong body of experiments he has produced will still be useful to the investigators who ultimately discover the cure for these horrifying diseases.

STEVEN ROTHMAN, M.D.
Professor of Neurology, Washington University
St. Louis, Mo.

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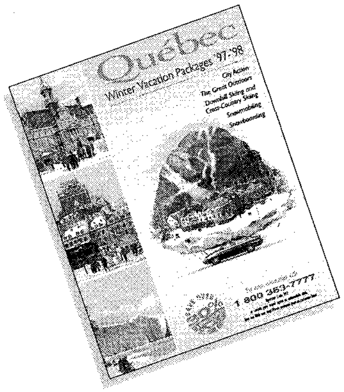

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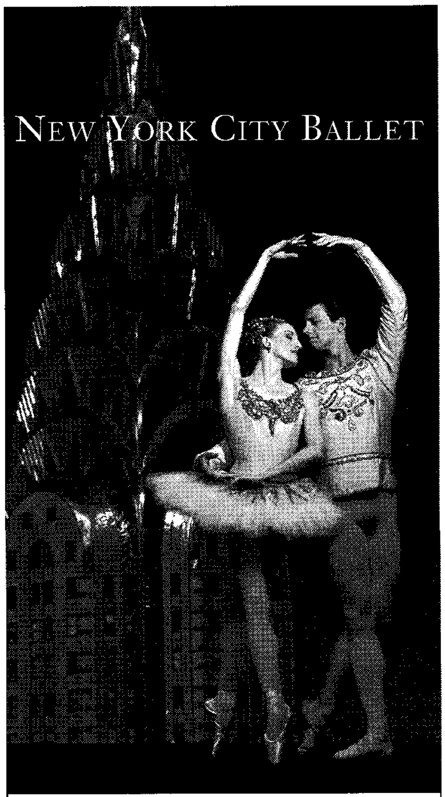

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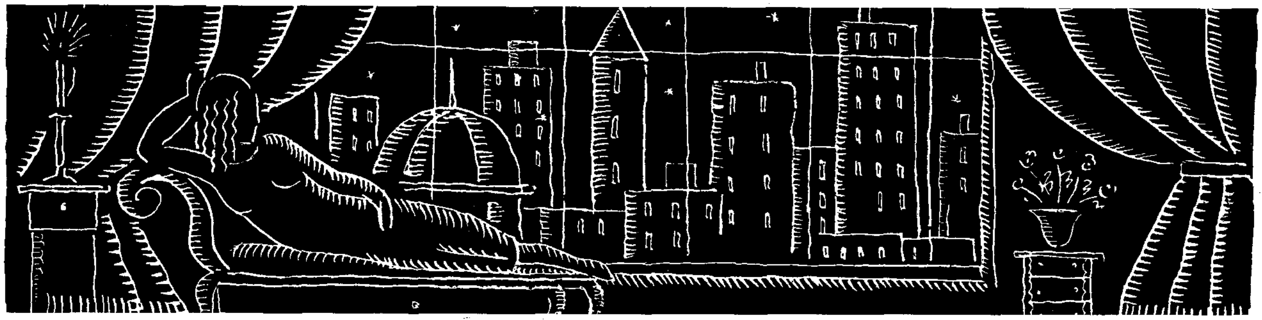
WENDY WHELAN AND PHILIP NEAL, *DIAMONDS*, IN FRONT OF THE CHRYSLER BUILDING. PHOTO BY RICHARD CORMAN.



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

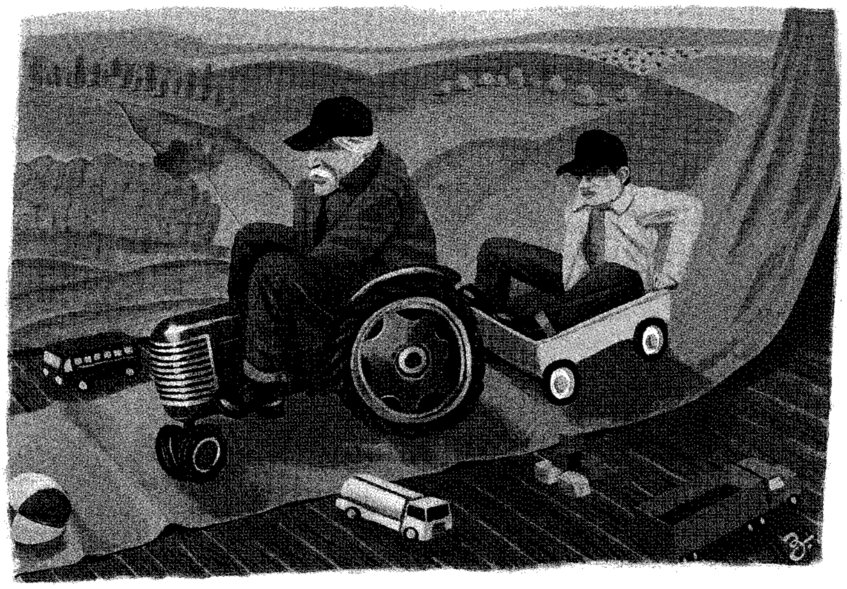
Benita Canova—Richard Foreman's new play, about a band of menacing schoolgirls, was inspired by the works of the painter Balthus. Previews begin Jan. 8. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Black Humor—Topical comedy, written and performed by the political satirist Lewis Black. In previews through Jan. 9. Opens Jan. 10 at 8. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

The Capeman—A musical by Paul Simon and Derek Walcott, based on the life of Salvador Agron, a New York gang member who in 1959, at sixteen, was sentenced to death for murder. Directed and choreographed by Mark Morris. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Century City—A baseball player is accused of rape in this legal drama by Mark Lee, starring Ellen Parker and Marcus Giamatti. In previews. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Gun-Shy—In Richard Dresser's romantic comedy, an ex-couple finds divorce as difficult to maintain as marriage. Gloria Muzio is the director. Previews begin Jan. 13. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)



Dan Hurlin and Dan Moses Schreier's "The Shoulder," at Dance Theatre Workshop.

June Moon—The Drama Dept.'s encore production of Ring Lardner and George S. Kaufman's 1929 comedy, about a Tin Pan Alley songwriter. Mark Nelson is the director. In previews. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Life's Loss's Loved—Kirk Wood Bromley and Aaron Beall's contemporary sequel to "Love's Labour's Lost." Opens Jan. 8 at 7:30 and continues through Feb. 1. (Nada, 167 Ludlow St. 420-1466.)

The Mikado—Presented by the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players. Jan. 8-9 at 8, Jan. 10 at 3 and 8, and Jan. 11 at 3. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

Ragtime—Terrence McNally (book) and Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens (score) have adapted E. L. Doctorow's 1975 novel for the musical stage. Frank Galati is the director. In previews. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Reno Finds Her Mind—The solo performer, in a brief engagement of her comic work in progress. Jan. 8-10 at 8. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

Signature Theatre Company—The Arthur Miller season continues with two one-acts, "I Can't Remember Anything" and "The Last Yankee," directed by Joseph Chaikin. In previews through Jan. 10. Opens Jan. 11 at 6:45. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Bashevis: Tales of I. B. Singer—Three of Isaac Bashevis Singer's stories ("A Quotation from Klopstock," "The Yearning Heifer," and "A Wedding in Brownsville"), beguilingly told by the actor David Margulies, alone onstage. For those who are familiar with Singer, the performance brings fresh life to his wise and funny tales of Jewish intellectuals in Europe and America; for those who aren't, the writer's sharp-eyed compassion should be a revelation in itself. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company presents its latest revue, "@Chicago City Limits.comedy." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

Cyrano de Bergerac—Frank Langella directs, and dons the schnozz in, his own adaptation of Rostand's romantic drama, from a translation by Brian Hooker. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes Jan. 18.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—This revival of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett aims for realism and historical scrupulousness: the new adaptation, by Wendy Kesselman, dispenses with the creaky devices of the original and adds material that Anne's father, Otto Frank, edited out of the first published version of the diary. There may be much to admire about the production—theatrically, it's an improvement, and the cast, under the direction of James Lapine, is generally fine—but the play's realism is also its fundamental flaw: its attempt to recreate Anne Frank's experience literally, to show us "what it was like," represents a failure of imagination. Accuracy is not a substitute for truth—and one of the truths we take away from Anne's diary is that we *can't* know what it was like. With George Hearn, Sophie Hayden, Harris Yulin, Austin Pendleton, and, as Anne, Natalie Portman, who looks the part but has a stiff and studied girlishness. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/15/97.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Field of Mars—A production inspired by Tacitus, in which the audience wanders through the set as the action progresses. Staged by Gale Gates et al. (37 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-522-4597.)

Goose-Pimples—In Mike Leigh's 1981 play, set in the pathetic zebra-striped bachelor pad of a London car salesman, a group of striving friends (keenly played by Max Baker, Gillian Foss, Sam Rockwell, and Caroline Seymour) can't help projecting their hopes and their bitterness onto a non-English-speaking Arab (Adam Alexi-Malle), who's with them only because of an accident of miscommunication anyway. Under the clear-eyed direction of Scott Elliott, the New Group brings a near-excruciating realism to Leigh's bleakly comic portrayal of the cruelty disappointment can inspire. At the end of the play's two and a half hours—it takes place virtually in real time—you'll feel lucky to have lived through it. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 18.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—A generally good-natured if somewhat choppy revue by Frank McCourt, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Jan. 25.)

Jackie—A complete delight. The playwright, Gip Hoppe, may be satirizing what we think we know about the former First Lady, but he does it with such heart and high comedy that you may not want to leave the

ZOHAR LAZAR

theatre. Margaret Colin leads the gifted cast, and Hoppe, who also directed, is aided and abetted in this zaniness by the set designer David Gallo. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Performances of "The Cure at Troy" (the Irish poet Seamus Heaney's adaptation of Sophocles' "Philoctetes") run in repertory with Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Joseph Gabriel Magic '98—It's all too clear from the trappings of his act that Mr. Gabriel comes to New York by way of Las Vegas, but his feats are certainly impressive. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Last Session—A musical by Steve Schalchlin (music and lyrics) and Jim Brochu (book), about an AIDS-afflicted songwriter's final studio work. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Lion King—The director Julie Taymor has created a theatrical event far more textured and original than the animated film, submerging the audience in a mythic universe; it's like being in a dream awake. The show's high visual style, however, is in sharp contrast to its low verbal one. Garth Fagan is the choreographer. (11/24/97) (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Marc Salem's Mindgames—The mind reader shows off his telepathic gift. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Mojo—Two parts Mamet, one part Pinter, and a smattering of Shepard, mixed together by the young Briton Jez Butterworth, whose characters converse in a flashy, garbled Cockney that's as unreal as the story's premise. Neil Pepe is the director. (12/1/97) (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 645-1242. Closes Jan. 17.)

The Old Neighborhood—David Mamet's three elegant, autobiographical one-act plays full of laughter and lament. Well acted by Peter Riegert, Patti LuPone, Vincent Guastaferro, Rebecca Pidgeon, and Jack Willis, and crisply directed by Scott Zigler. Serious, beautiful, and short: an almost impossible feat these days on Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Pride's Crossing—Tina Howe's new play is a tedious switchback ride up a mountain of family memories, crosscutting between the old age of Mabel Tidings Bigelow, who is ninety and once swam the English Channel, and the upper-middle-class family that she tried, but finally failed, to break free of. Howe makes the fatal mistake of confusing illustrative incident with dramatic action. Fortunately, Mabel is portrayed by Cherry Jones, who polishes all the tics, fumbles, and feisty outbursts of a nonagenarian to a high shine. Jack O'Brien directed. (1/5/98) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Proposals—Neil Simon's new play is set at the summer home of a family that has been disrupted by divorce and is about to be further shaken by death. Although the wisecracks rely on Catskills-era ethnic stereotypes from which all the humor has long been drained, there is real feeling here—a softly sad, end-of-summer feeling—and it's brought out very capably by L. Scott Caldwell, who plays the family's longtime housekeeper, and by Dick Latessa, as a divorced father who's still in love with his former wife. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Scarlet Pimpernel—This new musical, based on the Baroness Orczy novel, has a lot going for it (if you don't count its music and lyrics, which are dreadful and appalling, respectively): its charismatic star, Douglas Sills, Andrew Jackness's sets, and Jane Greenwood's costumes. Peter Hunt directed. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

The School for Scandal—A Pearl Theatre Company staging of Sheridan's 1777 comedy of manners. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know—A comic revue inspired by the Fodor's handbook of the same title. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

1776—Scott Ellis's lean, lively production of Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone's still fresh 1969 musical about the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. (9/8/97) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

70 Hill Lane—A performance by London's Improbable Theatre of Phelim McDermott's memory play about his family's haunted house. Jan. 8-12 at 7:30. Continues through Jan. 18. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

The Shoulder—Writer and director Dan Hurlin and composer Dan Moses Schreier's chamber opera was inspired by a 1994 newspaper report about a man who, unable to renew his driver's license because of poor vision, drove his riding lawnmower for forty-one days across the state of Iowa to tend to his sick brother. Wednesdays through Saturdays, through Jan. 17. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

The Show Goes On—Lyricist-librettist Tom Jones and composer Harvey Schmidt star in a revue of their songs. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes Jan. 18.)

Street Corner Symphony—A revue of some thirty songs, mostly from the sixties and seventies, which turns into a real beltfest at times. When the eight cast members tone things down a bit and do some harmonizing, though, you recognize what the show could have been. Conceived, choreographed, and staged by Marion J. Caffey. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

The Sunshine Boys—A revival of Neil Simon's comedy about two irascible old vaudevillians which provides a double dose of nostalgia: the tour guides for this trip to a bygone era of show biz are Ye Olde Odd Couple of television, Tony Randall and Jack Klugman. While there are some very funny lines, the production is somehow lacking in chemistry. The sandpapery friction that the twosome created so successfully on TV isn't much in evidence—they seem reduced to lovability. That's not a crime, but this production is definitely for those who prefer a

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warm cup of cocoa to a brisk toboggan ride. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Two Pianos, Four Hands—With the Canadian keyboardists Ted Dykstra and Richard Greenblatt. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

A View from the Bridge—Despite its cool reception in 1955, Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece proves, in this Roundabout Theatre revival, a potent and durable American fable. Under the skillful direction of Michael Mayer, Anthony LaPaglia gives Eddie a brooding, exciting presence, and Brittany Murphy, as his niece, captures every nuance of her character's child-woman appeal. The expert cast also includes Allison Janney, as Eddie's frazzled wife, and Gabriel Olds and Adam Trese, as the illegal immigrants whose arrival sets the tragedy in motion. The spare but suggestive set is by David Gallo. (1/5/98) (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach portrays a Jewish widower, in a drama by Jeff Baron. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOREVER TANGO:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE:** Century, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200. . . . **THE LIFE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Jan. 7 at 8: "Ash," "A Suite of Dances," "La Stravaganza," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "The Four Temperaments," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "The Four Temperaments," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 2: "Divertimento No. 15," "Duo Concertant," "A Suite of Dances," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 8: "Jewels." . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 3: "Ash," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "La Stravaganza," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 8: "Square Dance," "La Stravaganza," and "Brandenburg." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through March 1.)

"Late Night Sugar Flight," at P.S. 122.

KIM DEMARCO

"Altogether Different"—The annual festival of contemporary dance tests the mettle of seven promising choreographers. Kevin O'Day, whose works for the New York City Ballet have been popular with Lincoln Center audiences, has formed a company that débuts here. Other, older troupes, such as Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company and Joy Kellman & Company (both appearing later in the month), make the leap from intimate venues to a larger stage and a bigger house. All seven companies have created new work for this engagement. **O'DAY DANCES:** Jan. 6 and Jan. 9 at 8 and Jan. 8 (a sold-out gala) at 7:30. . . . ¶ **IRÈNE HULTMAN DANCE:** Jan 7 at 8 and Jan. 11 at 2 and 7:30. . . . ¶ **MARK DENDY DANCE & THEATRE:** Jan. 10 at 8. . . . ¶ **RONALD K. BROWN/EVIDENCE:** Jan. 13 at 8. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Jan. 25.)

"Unfinished Symphony"—Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks provide a tag-team dance experience, with seven dancers and seven musicians performing interdisciplinary high jinks: the cellist does a soft-shoe with his instrument, the choreographer tries her hand at the violin, and so on. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 8-11 at 8:30.)

Arts Presenters Showcase—Various dance companies, auditioning briefly for out-of-town presenters; admission is free and the atmosphere is relaxed—all in all, an ideal way to sample the wares of local choreographers. Jan. 10 at 11 A.M.: Allyson Green & Dominique Porter, and Creach/Koester. . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 3: The Wally Cardona Quartet, Irène Hultman Dance, John Jasperse Company, Dean Moss, Tere O'Connor Dance, and Susan Osberg/Work with Dancers Company. . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 11 A.M.: Urban Bush Women and Bebe Miller Dance Company. (Danspace Project. 674-8194.)

"Late Night Sugar Flight"—Ben Munisteri has various strategies for lightening the formalist tendencies of his choreography—joking, for example. "At the beginning of a rehearsal," he says, "I look at each dancer's face, to determine who has been crying, who is about to cry, and who will be crying by the end of the day." In his new full-length work, however, it's the music that does the surprising: his dancers don't hear the score (a different mix of music, ranging from Donizetti to Cornershop, every night) until they appear onstage. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Jan. 9-10 at 11 P.M. Through Jan. 24.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Dorothy Donegan Trio / Scott Hamilton, Lew Tabackin, and John Bunch—An evening of instrumental wizardry. The marvellous pianist Donegan, who subordinates her virtuosity to her delightfully capricious eclecticism, supplies the keyboard splash. Tenor madness comes courtesy of saxophonists Hamilton and Tabackin, two established stylists who between them have jazz from the thirties through the sixties wrapped up. The subtly swinging pianist Bunch is a male Donegan minus the coffee rush. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Jan. 8 at 8.)

Andy Statman Quartet—Statman is a clarinet and mandolin virtuoso and an American visionary. Although he has immersed himself in Eastern European klezmer music, he's more than willing to incorporate jazz, country, and other domestic sounds into the Old World mix. For this program he'll be looking eastward, as the ensemble performs songs from its 1997 recording, "Between Heaven and Earth: Music of the Jewish Mystics." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 8 at 8.)

"Salute to Jimmy Heath"—Maybe it took the passing of so many first-generation bop legends (Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Dexter Gordon, Thelonious Monk, et al.) to bring proper recognition to Heath, an early second-generation bopper. As a brilliant saxophonist, composer, arranger, and bandleader, he's a legend himself. Among the performers scheduled to appear are Wynton Marsalis, Tommy Flanagan, Slide Hampton, and Benny Golson. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 9 at 8.)

Lavender Light—The lesbian-and-gay gospel choir. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510. Jan. 10 at 8.)

Oasis / Cornershop—With the possible exceptions of the World Cup and the Spice Girls, there's little in England that generates more maniacal enthusiasm than an appearance by this oddly charismatic quintet from working-class Manchester. Maybe the Brits love Oasis because, from Noel Gallagher's retrograde songwriting to the band's antic hooliganism, the group's a powerful distillation of everything British. The boys are in top form on their latest album, "Be Here Now," which, like its predecessors, is huge in England but not over here. Unless Noel and brother Liam get into another fistfight, expect a comically impassive, nothing-but-the-facts show that will only underline the fact that Oasis is the best straight-ahead, no-frills rock band around. / An excellent English act, fronted by the Anglo-Pakistani singer Tjinder Singh, Cornershop has quickly become one of the most fascinating hybrids around. Capable of reworking everything from South Asian melismas to bone-dry Velvets riffs, the band has a pleasantly refreshing ironic charm. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Jan. 12 at 7:30.)

"A Musical Tribute to Billy Higgins"—From his early recordings with Ornette Coleman to his session work at Blue Note to his current status as the most dependably suave player on the scene, drummer Higgins embodies craft, taste, imagination, and—as a résumé that roams effortlessly from avant to hard bop to mainstream proves—range. Smiling back at "Smiling Billy" are David (Fathead) Newman, George Coleman, Buster Williams, Kenny Barron, and many more. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 12 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The Oak Room is closed for renovations until May.

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—"Fingerpainting," a 1997 chamber-jazz recording by bassist **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE**, trumpeter **NICHOLAS PAYTON**, and guitarist **MARK WHITFIELD**, offered a fresh exploration of Herbie Hancock tunes—a terrific idea that just didn't come off. Odds are this exceptional trio (in through Jan. 9) will have more luck sending these sturdy tunes aloft in performance. Jan. 10: Brazilian pianist **ELIANE ELIAS** has a light-handed ease with tropical rhythms and phrasing. Jan. 11: **CHICO O'FARRILL AND HIS AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. Arranger and bandleader O'Farrill has made one of the most welcome comebacks of the late nineties. His balance of steaming Latin rhythms, fervid bop improvisations, and resonant horn charts is as bracing as ever. Jan. 12: How **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI** has kept her big band going strong for twenty-plus years is anybody's guess. A showcase for its leader's distinctively modernist compositions, arrangements, and fluid bop piano, the orchestra also has a whirlwind of a soloist in Akiyoshi's husband, tenorist and flutist **LEW TABACKIN** (see also Concerts). Jan. 13: The **FAMOUS DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA**, di-

ONLY CONNECT

THE SMOKING GUN (http://www.thesmokinggun.com)—When the topic turns to the dissemination of facts (or "facts") on the Web, many people think of the M.I.T. commencement address Kurt Vonnegut never gave or of certain wild claims about the crash of T.W.A. Flight 800. But there's no room for rumor at the Smoking Gun, which gleans its information from legal documents available to the public through the Freedom of Information Act and is, according to its editors, "a Pierre Salinger-free zone." Salinger might not find many of the Smoking Gun's celebrity-related stories desirable bedside reading, but anyone else with a yen for dirt will be in hog heaven.

The simple design simulates a file cabinet, and each document inside has been scanned so that you see an image of the real thing rather than a mere transcription. Rifling through the folders, you'll find Exhibit A, the Tennessee Department of Health's order to revoke the medical license of George Nichopoulos, who was Elvis Presley's personal Dr. Yes. This document, however, concerns another of the doctor's patients, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Dr. Nick's free hand in prescribing methadone, Demerol, Versed, Didrex, Darvoset, and Percoset for him. (The doctor's reinstatement is under review.)

Most of the Gun's documents are amusing (the actress Kirstie Alley, we learn in her husband's petition for divorce, employs a full-time caretaker for her menagerie, and she hired a hundred-and-fifty-piece marching band one year for the couple's annual Halloween party); some are appalling (J. Edgar Hoover kept a close watch over the development of the Disney film "That Darn Cat"); and some have been much alluded to but seldom seen (the JonBenet Ramsey ransom note). Probably nothing here will change the course of history, but the site does offer a chance to experience the investigative journalist's thrill when plundering an archive in search of the truth. And, while seeing copies of the F.B.I.'s John Lennon files in their original form doesn't make them any less ridiculous, it does eliminate the middleman—journalist, editor, the government—allowing you to draw your own conclusions. Which, in some corners of the Web, is still the big idea.

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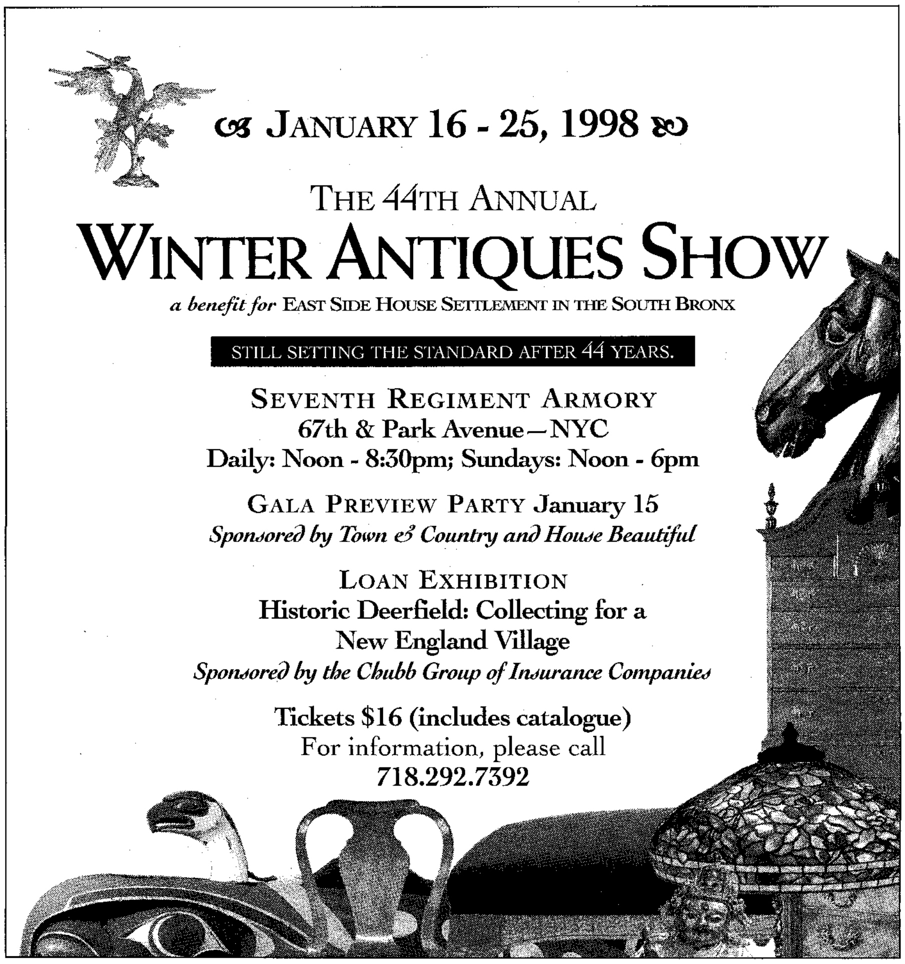

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rected by the composer's nineteen-year-old grandson, Paul Mercer Ellington. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Jan. 11: **B. B. KING** brought the blues into America's living room, but his fame and his ubiquity haven't diminished his powers. His single-string guitar solos can still startle with their beauty and intensity, and his singing walks the line between refinement and raw passion. Dining.

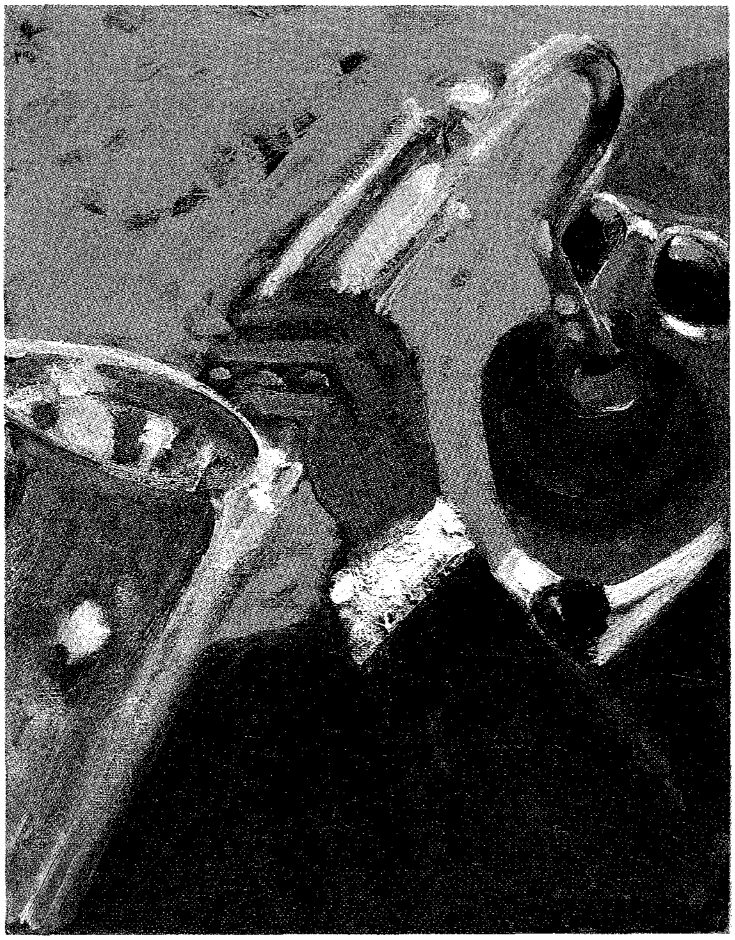
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through March 7, the amazing **EARTHA KITT.**

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 11: Two fine young trumpeters, **MARCUS PRINTUP** and **TIM HAGANS,** salute the great hard-bop hornman Freddie Hubbard. On their new "Hub-Songs" (one of the more curious releases of this rampantly celebratory age) they evoke recordings that Hubbard made with another trumpet legend, Woody Shaw—recordings that themselves saluted previous trumpet greats. If you can cut through the layers of adulation, you'll hear some adroit playing from two craftsmen still sorting through their influences in search of their own voices. Hubbard himself will be on hand Jan. 6-7. Mondays belong to **LES PAUL.** Now eighty-two, the master guitarist and pioneer electronics inventor is a delightfully loose cannon. Besides playing silken-toned, eccentrically phrased lines with an ease that belies the passing decades, Paul schmoozes with his band, the crowd, the waiters, and anyone else who happens into the club. There's no more entertaining way to start the workweek. Dining.

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—A new jazz establishment features some new jazz hopefuls. Through Jan. 11: **STEVE WILSON,** a sharp, smart alto saxophonist, has developed an enviable rapport with **LEON PARKER,** the drummer with the small kit and the huge imagination. Recently, these musical blood brothers have been playing duets, but a full band is on hand for this engagement.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Popular taste usually catches up with innovators; the cases of Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman spring to mind. But **CECIL TAYLOR** (Jan. 7-8) still sounds as visionary and disruptive, as poetic and discursive, as he must have back in 1957, when he first startled a staid jazz scene with his outright rejection of standard rhythms and formalized improvisatory ploys, not to mention his liberal—and terrifying—use of tonal clusters and other outré devices adapted from contemporary classical music. The sheer gusto of Taylor's astounding technique is mesmerizing. It's best to let yourself be engulfed by his musical torrents—you come out battered but enlightened. Jan. 12: The **OLIVER LAKE BIG BAND.** Lake is one well-rounded musican. A tart-toned saxophone virtuoso who could sustain an entire evening with his solo improvisations, he's also a big thinker with a taste for large ensembles that can show off his meaty compositions and his sure sense of coloring.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—**CAROL SLOANE,** the masterly New England jazz singer and sometime mellifluous disk jockey, is here for just two weeks. Sloane, like a host of others, came out of Ella Fitzgerald, but Ella built her songs brick by cheerful brick, while Sloane carves and bends and polishes hers, making them into subtle, moving secrets between the two of you.


Joe Lovano, appearing with friends at the Village Vanguard.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—Jan. 8: The **ORRIN EVANS** quartet, featuring **RALPH PETERSON.** Jan. 9-10: Not every musican can claim both to have played Smalls and to have worked with Frank Sinatra. Backing the Chairman of the Board must have been a thrill, but here the quick-witted altoist **JIM SNIDERO** can let his hair down and really blow.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Jan. 11: The **REGINA CARTER** quintet. Now that Stéphane Grappelli is gone, the mainstream jazz violinist Carter has an even larger share of the spotlight. She has a full-throated, hornlike sound that she's not afraid to flaunt, which made her a standout soloist at Wynton Marsalis's "Blood on the Fields" extravaganza at Lincoln Center last winter. The expert team of Kenny Barron (piano), Peter Washington (bass), Rodney Jones (guitar), and Lewis Nash (drums) lends its support. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The masterful saxophonist **JOE LOVANO** (through Jan. 11) has been juggling at least five different bands with such ease that we've come to take his peripatetic creativity for granted; a week featuring three of Lovano's musical incarnations should remind us anew of his extraordinary diversity. Kicking off this mini-retrospective is a quartet highlighting Lovano and trumpeter **TOM HARELL,** a longtime collaborator (Jan. 6-7); this Ornette Coleman-inspired small unit, with its free-jazz leanings may be the saxophonist's most experimental forum. Next up (Jan. 8-9) is the beefy ten-piece group that provided the sumptuous tonal bedding for Lovano on his 1997 tribute to Frank Sinatra. Completing the week (Jan. 10-11) is the same pairing—Lovano and the whirlwind Cuban pianist **GONZALO RUBALCABA**—that has produced the refulgent new disk "Flying Colors." The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. A purring trio of precision-tuned players—pianist **PETE MALINVERNI,** bassist **DENNIS IRWIN,** and drummer **LEROY WILLIAMS**—performs through Jan. 10; symmetry and eloquence are guaranteed. Starting Jan. 12: **CHARLES THOMAS** (piano) and **RAY DRUMMOND** (bass).

ROCK, ETC.

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the perfect generic environment for three to five unknown bands each night trying to escape obscurity. Staten Island's **PROFESSOR AND MARYANN** bring their precocious pop in on Jan. 7. An Elvis tribute takes place on Jan. 8, the King's birthday.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 10: A-cappella splendor with the **BOBS.** Jan. 12: **VICTORIA WILLIAMS,** the Kewpie-voiced modern folkie who continues to battle multiple sclerosis with her caustic songwriting and ameliorative spirit.

Chez Es Saada, 42 E. 1st St. (777-5617)—The improbably grand tiled staircase brings you down to a basement transformed by scattered rose petals and golden light into the secret Tangier of Burroughs and Bowles. North African-flavored bistro fare is served throughout, d.j.s play everything from nineteen-fifties Egyptian 45s to up-to-the-minute Moroccan *chaiba* dance music, and you can slouch on a hassock and sip a vintage cocktail. For all the glamour, though, the owners are determined to maintain a neighborhood atmosphere, easygoing and friendly.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. Jan. 8: Lowdown guitar prodigy **"MONSTER" MIKE WELCH** graduated from high school and matriculated at Berkeley this year. This is his only New York gig before hitting the books again. Talk about a winter break. With blues-piano player **DAVID MAXWELL.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—A medium-sized, brick-walled haven of a back room where, no matter who's onstage, the listening is a pleasure. Jan. 8: Though her work has been overshadowed by the more iconoclastic accomplishments of Courtney Love, Thalia Zedek, of **COME,** is still one of the most formidable songwriters in the indie-rock pantheon. With local up-and-comers **LES SAVY FAV.** Jan. 11: As the brains behind the Dream Syndicate, **STEVE WYNN** was a high-ranking post-punk auteur. The group's 1982 LP, "The Days of Wine and Roses," was a cherished soundtrack to dorm-room angst, and it has worn surprisingly well. Wynn's strong 1996 effort, "Melting in the Dark," backed by indie rockers Come (see above), proved that he can still do a better Lou Reed than anybody (with the possible exception of Lou Reed)—no easy task in today's crowded field. Also on the bill is ex-Television guitarist **RICHARD LLOYD.**

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

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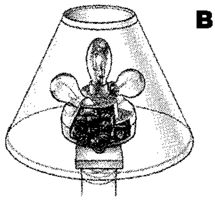

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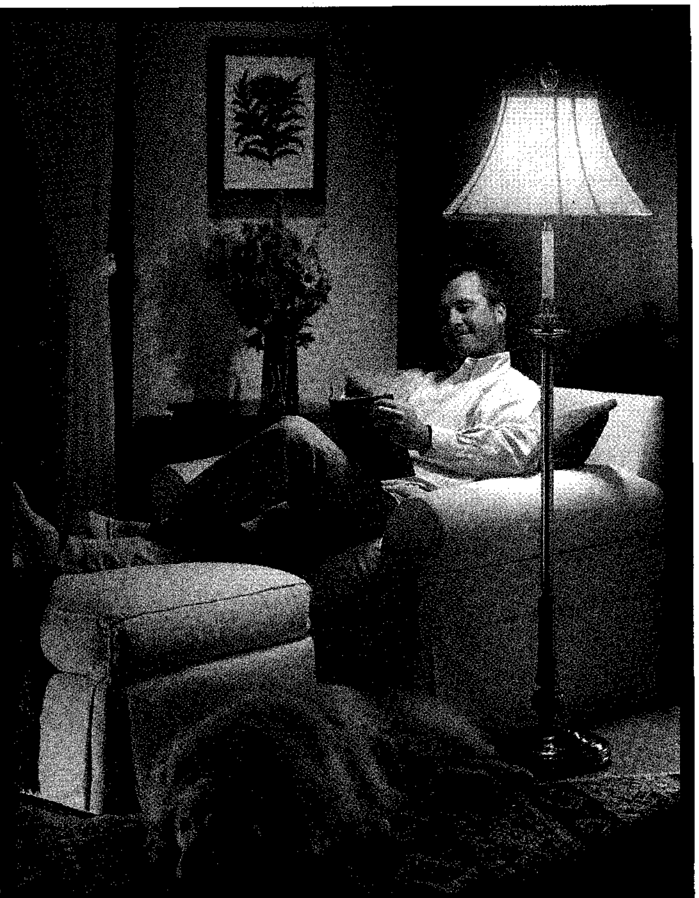

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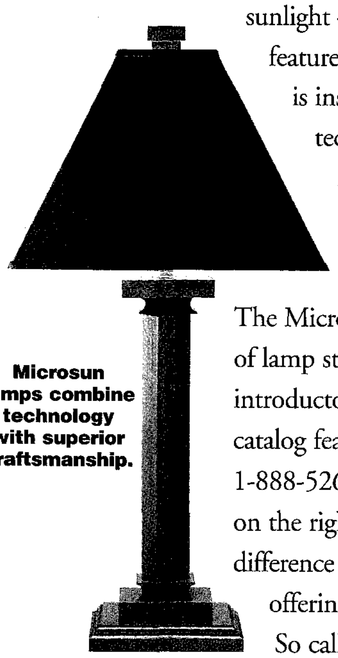

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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"The Private Collection of Edgar Degas." Degas (1884-1917) amassed one of the finest collections of paintings, drawings, and prints of his day. (At one point he even considered forming his own museum.) It was dominated by the work of Ingres and Delacroix, the heroes of the artist's youth, but was also strong in Manet, Cassatt, Cézanne, Gauguin, and, of course, Degas. The show is valuable not only for the extraordinary quality of the art but also for the insight it provides into Degas's aesthetic temperament. Among the riches: Delacroix's "Count de Mornay's Apartment" and his portrait of Baron Schwiter, several portraits by Ingres, the London fragments of Manet's "Execution of Maximilian," and Gauguin's copy after Manet's "Olympia." Through Jan. 11. . . . ¶ "Flowers Underfoot: Indian Carpets of the Mughal Era." A sumptuous collection of rare Indian carpets from the late sixteenth century (when the Mughal emperor Akbar founded the first imperial carpet workshops) through the eighteenth. The finest were made from pashmina, the underfleece of the Himalayan mountain goat, on silk foundations, and there is a stunning example here from around 1630, during the reign of Shah Jahan, when the flower style dominated: a shimmering niche carpet in exquisite dyes—pink, sand, ivory, celadon, mandarin, garnet—with a leafy, blooming poppy plant flanked by a pair of tulips in the center. With about two thousand knots per square inch, it's breathtaking. Through March 1. . . . ¶ "King of the World: A Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle." Through Feb. 8. . . . ¶ "The Drawings of Filippino Lippi and His Circle." Through Jan. 11. . . . ¶ "Jackson Pollock: Early Sketchbooks and Drawings." Through Feb. 8. . . . ¶ An exhibition at the Costume Institute devoted to the work of Gianni Versace. Through March 22. . . . ¶ "Francesco Clemente: Indian Watercolors." Through Feb. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"On the Edge: The Werner and Elaine Dannheisser Collection." Elaine Dannheisser, the colorful collector who butted heads with Morley Safer on the notorious "60 Minutes" segment trashing contemporary art, seems like an archetype of the eighties, a decade when patrons sometimes eclipsed artists. The collection she and her husband have donated to the museum does include important pre-eighties works—by Joseph Beuys, Lawrence Weiner, Carl Andre, and Robert Ryman, among others—but its standouts are by the stars of the Gordon Gekko years: Jeff Koons, Robert Gober, Anselm Kiefer, etc. Given the Modern's somewhat conservative reputation as a bastion of modernist aesthetics, the Dannheisser bequest is significant. Through Jan. 20. . . . ¶ "New Photography 13" features work by Rineke Dijkstra, An-My Lê, Vik Muniz, and Kunié Sugiura. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ "New Video from Great Britain," a two-hour compilation of short works, each from one to eighteen minutes long, by Gillian Wearing, Ed Lipski, Sam Taylor-Wood, and others. On a continuous loop, through Feb. 1. . . . ¶ "Deadpan," a video installation by Steve McQueen, in the Project Room. Through Feb. 10. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on view. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Richard Diebenkorn retrospective presents examples from every phase of the California master's career, including early sketches and figure studies, fifties-era abstractions, landscapes from the sixties, the "Ocean Park" series, and the late collages. Through Jan. 11. . . . ¶ "The Warhol Look/Glamour Style Fashion." Through Jan. 18. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"The Nature of Diamonds" looks at many facets of the adamantine stone, from its birth in volcanic fissures to its eventual rise to the heads of heads of state (e.g., on the crown of Peter the Great, displayed in the exhibition's walk-in diamond vault). Through April 26. . . . ¶ "Drawing Shadows to Stone: Photographing North Pacific Peoples, 1897-1902." Through March 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

"Tiên Phu’o’ng, Northern Vietnam," by An-My Lê, in MOMA*'s "New Photography 13."*

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"The Furniture of George Hunzinger: Invention and Innovation in Nineteenth-Century America." Settees, daybeds, plant stands, stationary rockers, and a multitude of other chairs (many of them Hunzinger's 1866-patented folding-reclining ones), by one of America's preëminent Victorian furniture makers. His constructions reflect the period's gluttonous appetite for the Gothic and the baroque, as well as the aesthetic influences of his native southern Germany: there is a kind of Wagnerian madness to much of his work, but its unabashed eccentricity is precisely its appeal. However, his best constructions are his most Spartan ones, utilizing, in place of traditional upholstery, grids of woven wire which are, in fact, oddly beautiful. Through Feb. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—"Four Acts in Glass" fills all available galleries with installations by Dale Chihuly, William Morris, Pike Powers, and Bertil Vallien. Through Jan. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

Dahesh Museum, 601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—"Rosa Bonheur: All Nature's Children," an exhibition of pretty animal studies and plein-air oils by the nineteenth-century artist, whose scandalous reputation appears to have come largely from her habit of wearing pants and smoking cigars. Through Feb. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—"Robert Adam, the Creative Mind: From the Sketch to the Finished Drawing." Sixty-six drawings and watercolors—by the eighteenth-century Scottish architect, his brother and partner James, and the artists of their studio—displaying the range of the firm's neoclassical projects, from garden structures to such grand-scale architectural monuments as Culzean Castle, in Strathclyde, and Kedleston Hall, in Derbyshire. Through April 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America." There's not a lot of great painting here, but that's not the point of this worthy and thoughtful show. Its real focus is the role of Jews, and the imperatives of assimilation (at least among a certain class), in the development of early America. In a vibrant oil-on-ivory miniature, Gershom Mendes Seixas—the first native-born hazan of an American Jewish congregation and the man who pronounced the blessing on George Washington at his inauguration— wears the clerical garb of a Protestant minister. Through Jan. 11. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (832-1155)—"Japanese Theatre in the World," an ambitious exhibition tracing the strands of classical drama—Bugaku, Noh, Kyogen, Bunraku, Kabuki—from the fourth century to the contemporary avant-garde. Through Feb. 1. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—"A Seal Upon Thine Heart: Glyptic Art of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3500-2100 B.C." Sun gods, griffins, superhuman conquerors, and miniature scenes of Mesopotamian life, all incised into stones, from marble to lapis lazuli. Through April 26. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"New York from Above: An Aerial View" gathers twenty-six bird's-eye views of the city from the past century, captured from vantage points ranging from steeples to satellites. Through June 14. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"A Century Together" marks the centennial of the five boroughs' consolidation into a single city, a move that spin doctors of the day promised would lower taxes, improve government, and eliminate slums. . . . ¶ "Signs and Wonders: The Spectacular Lights of Times Square" surveys midtown pyrotechnics from the earliest days of incandescence (multi-bulb Wrigley's "spearmen" frolicking on a block-long pack of gum) through the heyday of neon and steam (Planters peanuts' leguminous cascade, Camel cigarettes' ten-foot smoke rings) to current L.E.D.

computer technology. Through March 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (718-592-9700)—"Out of India: Contemporary Art of the South Asian Diaspora" presents work that reflects the ethnic, political, and religious concerns of artists born in the half-century since India gained independence. Through March 22. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Jean de Brunhoff (1899-1937)—The original wash drawings, with their familiar ink outlines, of the artist's 1939 children's book, "Babar and Father Christmas." Through Jan. 17. (Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.)

Richard Fleischner—A small group of muted works in gouache on paper, which have been scraped and scratched and rubbed and washed to produce the look and feel of mottled age. Each of these exquisite fields has a geometric shape at the center—a Reinhardt grid within a black square, say, or, in one case, a simple maze—and, for all their restraint, they have a surprising sensuousness. Through Jan. 10. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

Franz Kline (1910-62)—An engaging survey tracing the painter's artistic growth from the representational portraits and sketches of his twenties and thirties to the culmination of his exploration of Abstract Expressionism—the garish, hysterical "Scudera"—in the year before his death. Through Jan. 17. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 988-6870.)

Joan Nelson—Two large, dark fictive landscapes in acrylic and oil on wood, and dozens of tiny, meticulous ones on paper, rendered, variously, in acrylic ink, spray enamel, wax, and glitter. Some are based on paintings by other artists, like Claude Lorrain and George Caleb Bingham, and some on found images—from the junk store, the attic, the *Reader's Digest.* Their size gives them the innate appeal of all miniatures, which take you to places far away; it also reminds you just how far away the natural world has come to seem. Through Jan. 24. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Jonathan Shahn—Small, rough-hewn, boxlike sculptures, most of them made of plaster and illuminated, through squares of glass set into the top, by lamps suspended overhead. Each box encases a male head or figure (some of them marked up with pencil or crayon scratchings) that seems either too large, creating a feeling of suffocation, or, as in "Tiny Head in a Box," too small, creating a feeling of comic alienation. These inscrutable, almost abstract presences suggest nothing so much as prisons of the mind. Through Jan. 10. (O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. 355-3330.)

"McEntee & Company"—A welcome reappraisal of the paintings and drawings of Jervis McEntee (1828-91), a Zelig of the Hudson River School, better known today for his friendships (protégé of Frederick Church, confidant of Sanford Gifford, travelling companion of Worthington Whittredge) than for his artistic output. Work by his chums is included for comparison. Through Jan. 17. (Beacon Hill Fine Art, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 734-3636.)

Short List—**richard baker,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Jan. 17. . . . **gustave courbet,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through March 7. . . . **jan frank,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through Jan. 10. . . . **william gropper,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through Jan. 31. . . . **mitchell johnson,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. Through Jan. 28. . . . **markus lüpertz,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays; through Jan. 24. . . . **marcello mondazzi,** Landon, 1926 Broadway, at 65th St. 721-8277. Through Jan. 11. . . . **suzanne pines** and **nancy hagin,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Both shows through Jan. 31. . . . **tony smith and christopher wilmarth,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Jan. 24. . . . **saul steinberg,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through Feb. 7.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Robert Longo—The artist's yearlong drawing-a-day project demonstrates an impressive range of photorealist effects, lavished mostly on an all too familiar take on media saturation (the Munich Olympics, Janis Joplin, a burning cross, Tiger Woods). Through Jan. 10. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.)

Andy Warhol (1927-87) / **Yayoi Kusama**—Wafting through the gallery, Warhol's famous mylar "Silver Clouds" (1966; these are a re-creation) are irresistible. Kusama's large sculpture, "A Snake" (1974), is a long floor piece made of the eccentric Japanese artist's characteristic phallic tendrils. A winning combination. Through Jan. 31. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

"George Condo and William Burroughs: Collaborative Works"—Paintings, drawings, and a sculpture, made over an eight-year period at the late Beat legend's home in Lawrence, Kansas. The pictures freely combine abstract and representational elements in a manner that in recent years has grown very familiar. The crudely expressionistic figurative elements seem more likely to have been Burroughs's contribution. The works are uneven, but, perhaps for extra-aesthetic reasons, many of them have an undeniable charm. Through Jan. 17. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

"Joan Mitchell/John Chamberlain: A Juxtaposition"—Paintings by Mitchell (1926-92), a second-generation Abstract Expressionist, and freestanding and wall-mounted crushed-auto-part sculptures by Chamberlain (b. 1927). The two are almost exact contemporaries, yet, despite their obvious affinities, her work seems to exhale the spirit of the fifties, whereas his, with its conspicuous reliance on ready-made elements, is much more sixties. The large Chamberlain here, "Divine Ricochet" (1991), is floridly gorgeous. Through Jan. 10. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List—**thomas andersen,** Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through Jan. 28. . . . **erzsébet baerveldt,** I-20 Gallery, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100. Through Jan. 10. . . . **graciela hasper,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Jan. 29. . . . **james hill,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Jan. 28. . . . **bob knox,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Jan. 31. . . . **francisco leiro,** Marlborough, 211 W. 19th St. 463-8634. Through Feb. 7. . . . **glenn ligon,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Jan. 28. . . . **scott lyall,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through Jan. 31. . . . **ernesto pujol,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through Jan. 31. . . . **carrie yamaoka,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Jan. 17.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Judie Bamber and **Kurt Kauper**—Bamber's intimate watercolors (apparently all of the same man, sometimes accompanied by a small girl) have the banal, poignant quality of snapshots—documents both of loss and of remembrance. Interspersed are a pair of Kauper's large-scale, ambiguous "Diva Fiction" oil portraits, of what look like women to be reckoned with. Posed in brilliantly colored, beautifully draped gowns—camp Ingres—against vivid monochromatic backgrounds, they project the imperious remove of majestic birds. Through Jan. 10. (Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480.)

Joseph Di Giorgio—Boldly composed oil-pastel landscapes of Prospect Park, each drawn six months after the season whose pageantries it depicts. The method gives the work a Wordsworthian piquancy: the Fauvist palette (lilac spring rain, lima-bean winter sky) looks truer than true when recollected in tranquillity. Through Jan. 10. (Steele, 420 West Broadway. 941-8388.)

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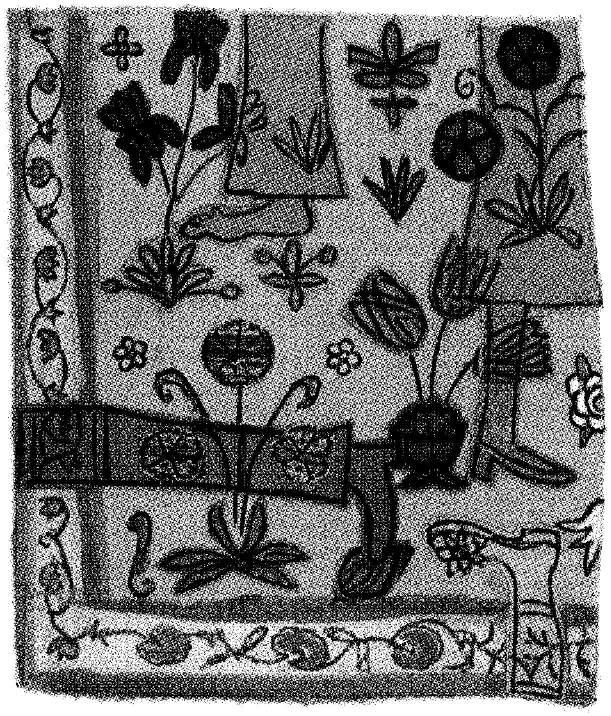
"Places That Are Elsewhere"—Slide, film, and video work by artists whose minds are not: Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, Katy Schimert, Peter Campus, and Christopher Williams, among others. Through Jan. 17. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

Short List—**juan abreu,** Goldstein, 39 Wooster St. 431-0314. Through Jan. 10. . . . **squeak carnwath,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through Feb. 14. . . . **paul forte,** Foster, 62 Crosby St. 966-9024. Through Jan. 31. . . . **daniel hauben,** Ingbar, 568 Broadway. 334-1100. Through Jan. 31. . . . **paula hayes,** A/C Project Room, 15 Renwick St. 219-8275. Through Jan. 17. . . . **daniel heyman,** 55 Mercer Street Gallery. 226-8513. Through Jan. 24. . . . **kana & olympios,** Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through Jan. 17. . . . **yves klein,** A/D, 560 Broadway. 966-5154. Through Jan. 10. . . . **sherry markovitz,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through Jan. 24. . . . **jennifer monick,** First New York: Staff Gallery, 495 Broadway. 925-9700. Through Jan. 17. . . . **beverly pepper,** Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Jan. 17. . . . **ulrich rückriem,** Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599. Through Feb. 28. . . .**julião sarmento,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through Jan. 24. . . . **philip taaffe,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Jan. 31.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Performing Arts Bazaar—The twenty-fifth installment of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' annual cleaning of the attic and, due to the library's impending two-year renovation, the last one of the millennium. Savvy collectors know that certifiable treasures lurk among the thousands of programs, recordings, books, posters, and other pieces of memorabilia on sale, many of them duplicates of items the library already owns. (Lincoln Center. Jan. 11, from 10:30 to 4. Tickets at the door.)



"Flowers Underfoot," at the Metropolitan Museum.

CATHERINE LAZURE

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Early Visions: 19th Century Photography"—Albumen and platinum prints by such innovators and masters as Fox Talbot, Atkins, Baldus, Le Secq, Beato, Cameron, Fenton, and Le Gray. Through Jan. 24. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223.)

"Living for the City"—Twenty years' worth of photographs of New York City, by such artists as Geoffrey Biddle, Sid Kaplan, Jules Allen, Sylvia Plachy, Arlene Gottfried, and Richard Sandler. Through Jan. 15. (Parsons School of Design, 66 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. Open weekdays, 9 to 6.)

"Monk's World"—A well-worth-it group show for jazz lovers: forty black-and-white pictures of the legendary pianist and composer Thelonious Monk, alone and with such luminaries as Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and Gerry Mulligan. The photographers include William Claxton, William Gottlieb, Herb Snitzer, and Lee Tanner. Through Jan. 11. (The Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson St., at Spring St. 242-1063. Opens at 1; open Sundays.)

"1930s New York"—Vintage works by Berenice Abbott, Sol Prom, Liborio Justo, and Joseph Kaplan. Through Jan. 17. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"Painted Press Prints, 1920s-1960s"—Retouched photographs that ran in newspapers and magazines around the world, most by anonymous artists and a handful by such photographers as Robert Capa, Dmitri Baltermants, and Roman Vishniac. Through Jan. 10. (Kasher, 54 North Moore St. 966-3978. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6.)

"Scene from Behind"—A playful group of images that, in one way or another, depict a posterior view. Among the artists are Helen Levitt, Lauren Greenfield, Louis Faurer, Lee Friedlander, and Leon Levinstein. Through Jan. 10. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5.)

International Center of Photography—"Nelly: From Athens to New York, the Work of Elli Seraïdari." . . . ¶ "Images from the Machine Age: Selections from the Daniel Cowin Collection." Both shows through Feb. 22. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Weegee's World: Life, Death and the Human Drama," a two-hundred-picture exhibition that spans the tabloid photographer's career. Through March 8. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**zeke berman,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Through Jan. 17. . . . **constantin brancusi,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Open Mondays; through Feb. 7. . . . **john brill,** Kent, 67 Prince St. 966-4500. Through Jan. 17. . . . **margaret courtney-clarke** and **tessa traeger,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Both shows through Jan. 24. . . . **andreas feininger,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Jan. 24. . . . **benedict j. fernandez,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Jan. 24. . . . **joan fontcuberta,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Jan. 31. . . . **robert glenn ketchum,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through Jan. 16. . . . **rebecca lepkoff,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Jan. 17. . . . **danny lyon,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Jan. 18. . . . **diana michener,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Jan. 17. . . . **marvin e. newman,** De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Through Jan. 25. . . . **adrian piper,** Erben, 476 Broome St. 966-5283. Through Jan. 31. . . . **richard rothman,** Sorokko, 430 West Broadway. 333-4747. Opens Jan. 7.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the American Museum of Natural History.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**peter grimes,** with Carolyn James, Philip Langridge, and Alan Opie; conducted by David Atherton. (Jan. 7 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 1:30.) . . . **il barbiere di siviglia,** with Delores Ziegler, Stanford Olsen, Dwayne Croft, Enric Serra, and Simone Alaimo; Edoardo Müller. (Jan. 8 at 8.) . . . Opening performances of the company's first-ever production of Strauss's **capriccio,** with Kiri Te Kanawa, Kathryn Harries, David Kuebler, Simon Keenlyside, Wolfgang Brendel, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; Andrew Davis. (Jan. 9 and Jan. 12 at 8.) . . . **boris godunov,** with Robynne Redmon, Vladimir Galouzine, Jacque Trussel, Alan Held, and Vladimir Vaneev; Valery Gergiev. (Jan. 10 at 7:30.) . . . **the rake's progress,** by Stravinsky, with Dawn Upshaw, Stephanie Blythe, Jerry Hadley, Samuel Ramey, and David Pittsinger; James Levine. (Jan. 13 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"Herod and the Innocents"—The New York Ensemble for Early Music presents post-Epiphany performances of its Christmas drama, based on medieval texts and music. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. Jan. 9 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 2 and 8. For information about tickets, call 749-6600.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Valery Gergiev conducts an all-Russian program, comprising Alexander Mosolov's "The Iron Foundry," Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Grigory Sokolov), and Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps." Were it not for "The Iron Foundry," which is only four minutes long, Mosolov (1900-73) would be almost entirely forgotten. That work, however, excerpted from his 1927 ballet "Steel," lives on as a footnote in the repertoire of pieces that imitate the sounds of machinery, which enjoyed a fleeting popularity in the nineteen-twenties. Mosolov's career took a plunge several years later, when the Soviet politicos changed their collective mind about the proletarian relevance of "machine music," and he descended into alcoholism. That condition led to his expulsion from the Union of Soviet Composers ("for staging drunken brawls and behaving rudely to waiters in restaurants," according to the musical lexicographer Nicolas Slonimsky), after which he was sent to the distant provinces to collect folk songs, direct local choruses, and live out his years in near-obscurity. Poor fellow; it's nice that somebody remembers him now and again. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Jan. 8 and Jan. 12 at 8; Jan. 9 at 11 A.M.; and Jan. 10 at 2.)

Cosmopolitan Symphony Orchestra—The composer and conductor Gerhard Samuel, recently named the ensemble's music director, leads Mozart's Symphony No. 1 and his Piano Concerto in E-Flat Major (K. 271, with Anton Nel), as well as Mahler's orchestral version of Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet and the première of a realization, by Gunter Elsholz, of Schubert's Symphony in D Major (D. 936a), for which the composer left sketches at the time of his death. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Jan. 11 at 2.)

American Composers Orchestra—Dennis Russell Davies leads Sessions's Symphony No. 1 and Hale Smith's "Ritual and Incantation," in addition to two works featuring the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet: Augusta Read Thomas's "Brass Axis" and Philip Glass's Concerto for Saxophone Quartet. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 11 at 3.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts Grieg's "Holberg" Suite, Antonino Pasculli's "Concert Fantasy on Themes from Donizetti's 'La Favorita' " (featuring oboist Gerard Reuter), Bach's Cantata No. 170 (with mezzo-soprano Katherine Benfer), and Mozart's C-Major Piano Concerto (K. 503, with Anton Kuerti). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Jan. 12 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—Violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Toby Hoffman, and cellist Bion Tsang play a trio by Haydn; Anton Nel joins them for piano quartets by Mendelssohn (in F Minor) and Brahms (in C Minor). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Jan. 8 at 7:30 and Jan. 11 at 4.)

Ruth Laredo—The pianist discusses and performs works by Scriabin (including the "Black Mass" Sonata). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 9 at 7.)

New York/Paris/New York—A new concert series, designed to spotlight musical cross-fertilization between France and America, begins with a recital by cellist Jérôme Pernoo and pianist Jérôme Ducros, of works by Stravinsky, Barber, Boulez, and Rachmaninoff. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Jan. 9 at 8.)

ST-X Ensemble—The group offers six pieces by Iannis Xenakis, including a première. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 9 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—In the second concert of its season-long reading of Beethoven's sixteen string quartets, the foursome offers the Quartets in D Major (Op. 18, No. 3), in F Minor (Op. 95, the "Serioso"), and in A Minor (Op. 132). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 10 at 8.)

Classical Action Celebrates—Five years ago, Classical Action was brought into being to mobilize classical and jazz musicians interested in lending their talents to the fight against AIDS. The organization celebrates its anniversary with an evening that includes performances by soprano Dawn Upshaw, pianist Fred Hersch, violinist Joshua Bell, clarinettist David Shifrin, double-bassist Edgar Meyer, the Orion String Quartet, dancer/choreographer Bill T. Jones, and Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. Actors Madeline Kahn and Nathan Lane keep the proceedings moving. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. Jan. 10 at 8:30. A benefit concert. For information about tickets, call 212-997-7717.)

Music by Aaron Jay Kernis—The Lark String Quartet offers the première of Mr. Kernis's Quartet No. 2 ("Musica Instrumentalis"), which the composer will discuss. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 10 at 9.)

Sundays on the Island—Soprano Rea Hagiwara, violinist Zoran Jacovcic, and pianist Eleonor Bindman perform works by Handel, Schubert, Saint-Saëns, and others. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Jan. 11 at noon.)

Brian Asawa—The countertenor sings arias and songs by Dowland, Mozart, Medtner, Jake Heggie, and others; with pianist Malcolm Martineau. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 11 at 2.)

Kandinsky Trio—The ensemble offers piano trios by Haydn (in E Minor) and Brahms (in C Major); double-bassist James VanDemark assists in works by Giovanni Bottesini and Libby Larsen. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 11 at 2.)

Meadowmount Trio—Performing piano trios by Haydn, Paul Schoenfeld (his "Café Music"), and Dvořák. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 11 at 2.)

Grzegosz Olkiewicz—Flutist, playing works by Chopin (an obscure set of variations on a theme from "La Cenerentola"), Lutoslawski, Penderecki, Górecki, and several American composers; with pianist Gerald Ranck. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Jan. 11 at 3.)

Richard Boothby and Shalev Ad-El—The viola da gamba player and the harpsichordist offer works by Bach and Marais. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Jan. 11 at 5.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—During the month of January, the Society is investigating the musical revolutions that occurred around the beginning of the twentieth century. Jan. 11 at 5: The Orion String Quartet anchors a program comprising Fauré's D-Minor Piano Quintet, Ravel's String Quartet, and Dvořák's E-Flat-Major String Quintet (Op. 97). . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 7:30: Stravinsky's Duo Concertante and Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo, Debussy's "Syrinx" and Cello Sonata, and Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" (with mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.)

Eleonor Bindman and Susan Sobolewsky—The pianists team up for four-hand works by Schubert, Debussy, and Brahms. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 11 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Safri Duo—A pair of Danish percussionists, Morten Friis and Uffe Savery, perform contemporary pieces by Andy Pape, Minoru Miki, Jacob ter Veldhuis, Anders Koppel, and Fuzzy, as well as two numbers sure to attract the curious: arrangements of Mendelssohn's Scherzo from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and of Chopin's "Fantaisie-Impromptu." (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 11 at 8.)

Beverly Serra-Brooks—In her New York début recital, the pianist, a winner of the 1997 Artists International Competition, offers works by Beethoven (the "Appassionata" Sonata), Chopin, Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann (his Symphonic Études), Prokofiev, and Lee Brooks. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 11 at 8:30.)

Once Upon an Accordion—An accordion quartet offers a wide-ranging program that highlights the different characters of French, Irish, and English instruments and traditions. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Jan. 12 at noon. Admission by contribution.)

Lara Downes—The pianist offers Barber's "Souvenirs," Ginastera's "Danzas Argentinas," and Ravel's "La Valse," among other works. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 12 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

Makiko Hirata—Pianist, performing Chopin's Ballades No. 2 and No. 4, as well as Brahms's Sonata No. 3. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. Jan. 12 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

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SEE IT ON PBS

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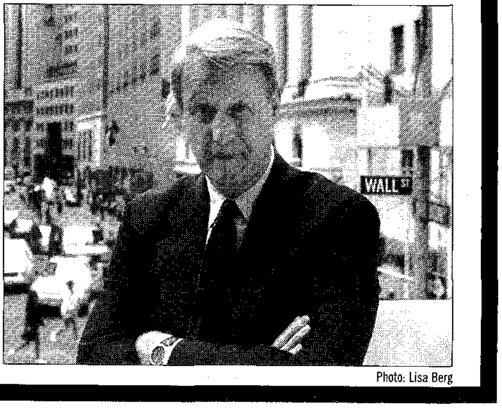
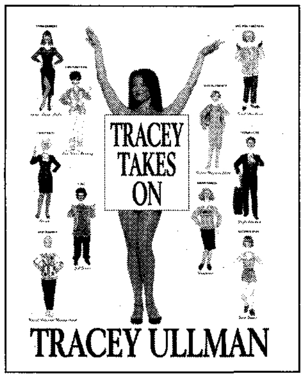


Photo: Lisa Berg

LOOK WHO'S COMING TO BARNES & NOBLE

Tracey Ullman

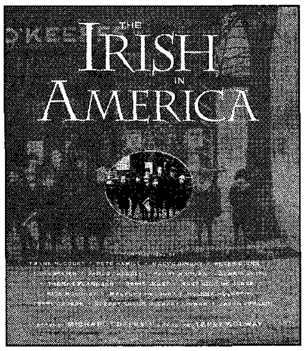
Monday, January 12th, 7:30-8:30 PM
Union Square
33 East 17th Street
Discussion • Signing



Meet Emmy Award-winning comic actress Tracey Ullman when she discusses and signs copies of *Tracey Takes On*, in which she brings the hilarious characters from her hit HBO series to life on the printed page.

A Celebration of Irish History

Friday, January 16th, 7:30-8:30 PM
Union Square
33 East 17th Street
Discussion • Signing



Join Terry Golway, author of *The Irish in America,* and panelists Thomas Lennon, filmmaker of the upcoming PBS film *The Irish in America: Long Journey Home*; Peter Quinn, historian and novelist; and Helena Mulkerns, literary critic and fiction writer, when they discuss and sign copies of *The Irish in America: A History.*

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ENSEMBLE GALILEI—Performing music composed by women, from twelfth-century works by Hildegard von Bingen to Irish jigs and reels. (Church of the Holy Family, 315 E. 47th St. 754-2395. Jan. 12 at 8.)

CARLOS PRIETO—The noted Mexican cellist, who since 1980 has premièred some fifty compositions (including fifteen full concertos), performs works by de Falla, Piazzolla, Roberto Gerhard, Mario Lavista, and Tomás Marco; pianist Edison Quintana assists. (Spanish Institute, 684 Park Ave. 628-0420. Jan. 13 at 7:30.)

MUSIC AT THE ANTHOLOGY—The Talujon Percussion Quartet assists members of this chamber-music collective in a concert that comprises works by Chester Biscardi, Eleanor Sandresky, and Lili Boulanger, as well as the premières of compositions by Chien-Yin Chen and the late Randy Hostetler. (Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. 505-5181. Jan. 13 at 8.)

RASCHÈR SAXOPHONE QUARTET—The foursome performs works by Glass, Wuorinen, Xenakis, and Michael Denhoff. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 13 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

GRAVIKORDS, ETC.—Just a year ago, we recommended a fascinating book-with-CD titled "Gravikords, Whirlies & Pyrophones" (Ellipsis Arts), which spotlights experimental musical instruments and the sometimes eccentric people who make them. Many of the inventions featured in that collection are on display at the World Financial Center's Winter Garden, where visitors can observe such instruments as the beepmobile, the car-horn organ, and the gravikord itself in action. (Battery Park City. Jan. 7-16, daily, from 9 to 9. . . . NOTE: On Jan. 7 at 7, a handful of inventors and cutting-edge musicians offer a performance/demonstration. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"WOKA, WOKA, WOKA"—The American Museum of the Moving Image presents "Computer Space '98," an exhibition of vintage arcade video games and the latest home-computer versions. The title comes from the 1971 game Computer Space, which was one of the first of the coin-operated models. Its green plastic Jetsonesque casing is on display, along with nineteen other better-known arcade relics, including Pong, Pac-Man, and Asteroids. Most of the machines are operable and can be played (admission includes four free tokens). PaRappa the Rapper (a musical game), Zero Zero (an amusement designed for girls), working re-creations of Pong, and recent offerings for personal computers round out the show. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 718-784-0077.)

GETTING IN OVER YOUR HEAD—The eighty-eighth New York National Boat Show continues through Jan. 11 at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, with fishing and boating seminars, waterskiing clinics, and a thousand runabouts, motor cruisers, and other fibreglass reasons to go heavily into debt. (Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. For more information, call 922-1212.)

READING—Jan. 12 at 8:15: Poets Mary Leader, Carl Phillips, and Vijay Seshadri read from their work, in an evening hosted by fellow verse maker Frank Bidart. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

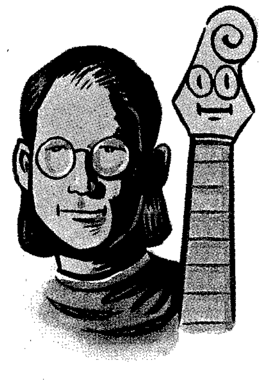
TALKS—Jan. 11 at noon: The political satirist and illustrator Edward Sorel discusses his work. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway. 718-638-5000, ext. 286.) . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 2: Dr. Bruce S. McEwen, head neuroendocrinologist at Rockefeller University, expounds on the connections between hormones, the brain, and stress. (New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Flushing Meadows–Corona Park. 718-699-0005.) . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 6:30: Decorative-arts specialist Eric Silver traces the evolution of modernism in home furnishings. (William Doyle Galleries, 175 E. 87th St. For reservations, which are required, call 427-2730, ext. 219.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Rock Notes

ELVIS PRESLEY, who would have been sixty-three this week, once said of rock and roll, "I don't think it'll ever die completely out, because they're gonna have to get something mighty good to take its place." To date, nobody has come up with anything better.

The singer-songwriter Marshall Crenshaw has never been able to resist the allure of rock and roll, and he says about seventy-five per cent of the books he owns are about pop music. He likes STARK RAVING ELVIS (Berkley), William McCranor Henderson's novel about an Elvis impersonator, but mostly he favors biographies. "The truth of rock and roll is far, far more twisted than the fiction," he says. "The fiction just hasn't measured up, compared to what you can find in some of these true-life stories of unfortunate dead rock stars."



Marshall Crenshaw

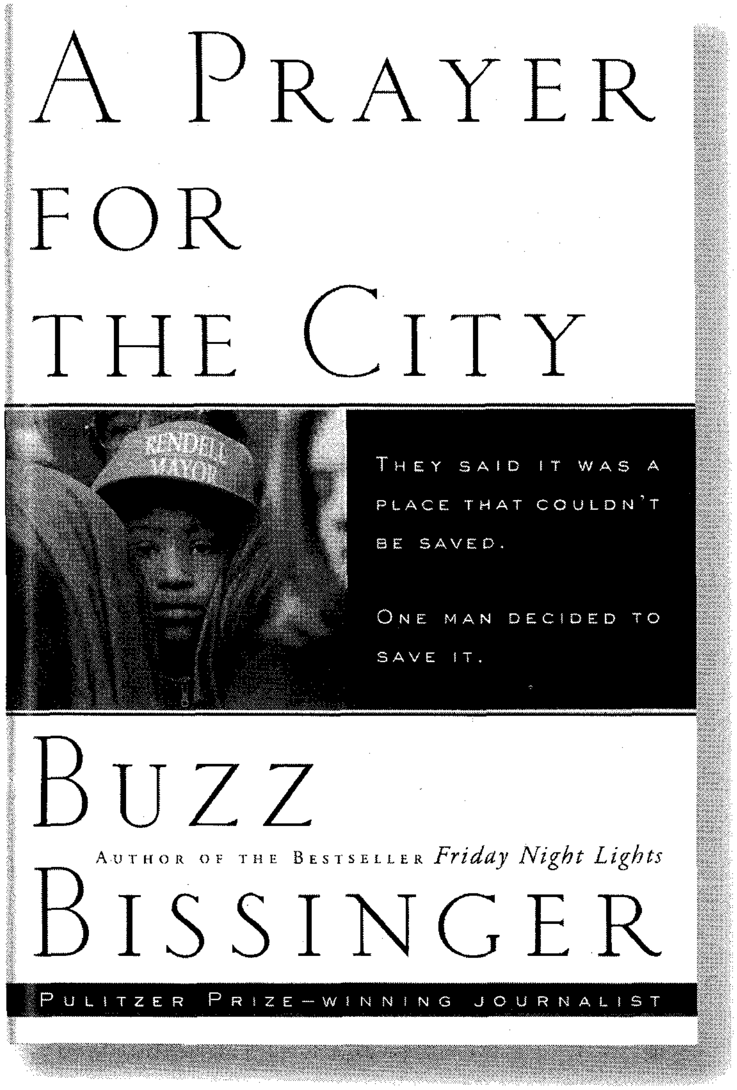
DOUG ALLEN

Crenshaw's favorite rock biography is CRY: THE JOHNNIE RAY STORY (out of print), by Jonny Whiteside, which he calls "an essential book about fame and pop culture." He also admires BILL HALEY: THE DADDY OF ROCK AND ROLL (out of print), by John Swenson, and THE DAY THE WORLD TURNED BLUE (out of print), a biography of Gene Vincent by Britt Hagarty, about which he says, "After about page forty, it's like a roller coaster into hell." The book includes a picture of Vincent's headstone, on which the melody of "Be-Bop-a-Lula" has been engraved. "The sad part of it is, they have it written incorrectly."

The Elvis book Crenshaw likes best is Peter Guralnick's LAST TRAIN TO MEMPHIS (Little, Brown), not least because it includes a photograph, taken in Memphis in July, 1954, that, he feels, captures the essence of Presley's story. In it, Elvis seems to be wearing heavy eye shadow, and his hair is "sort of greased all over and a little bit unkempt in the back, and then it just shoots up straight in the front about two and a half inches. . . . He looks like nobody else. Somebody who'd dare to present himself in that way, you figure they're gonna get famous or something."

THE RESCUE OF AN AMERICAN CITY.

A COMPELLING NEW WORK BY THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS.*



A PRAYER FOR THE CITY

THEY SAID IT WAS A PLACE THAT COULDN'T BE SAVED.

ONE MAN DECIDED TO SAVE IT.

BUZZ BISSINGER

AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLER *Friday Night Lights*

PULITZER PRIZE–WINNING JOURNALIST

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Buzz Bissinger became a bestselling author with *Friday Night Lights*, his provocative look at high school football in Texas. Now Bissinger trains his keen eye on Philadelphia as Mayor Edward Rendell fights to save a city in the throes of economic decline. The author profiles the indefatigable mayor, as well as four of the city's citizens, each of whom is affected by events at City Hall. Set against a backdrop of high-pressure politics, their stories illustrate the way America's cities really work today. (Random House)

Pub. Price $25.95
B&N Price $23.35

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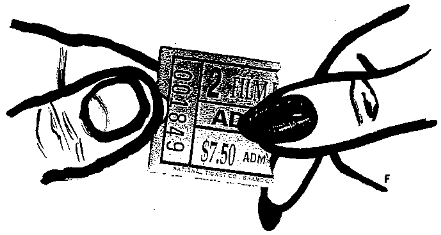


THE MOVIES

OPENINGS

Arguing the World—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Jan. 7.

Firestorm—A thriller about forest blazes and an escaped murderer, starring Howie Long, Scott Glenn, William Forsythe, and Suzy Amis, and directed by Dean Semler. Opening Jan. 9.

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

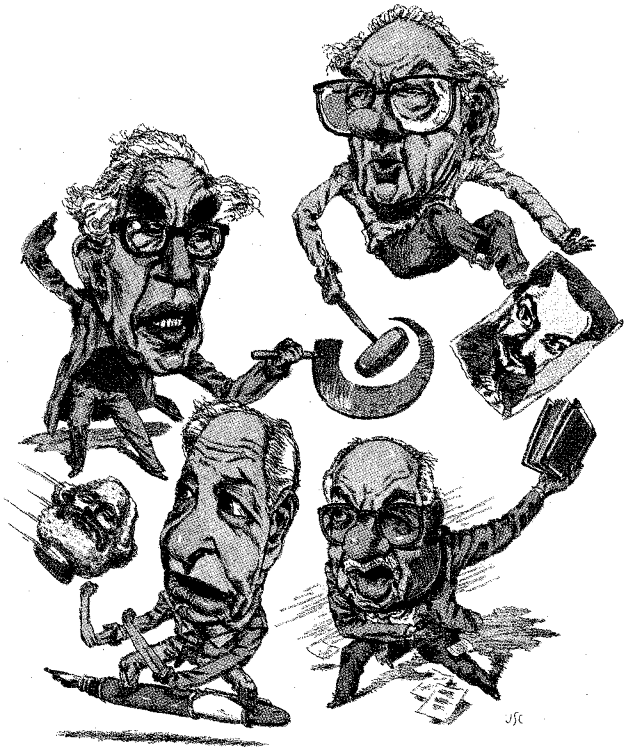
Amistad—Steven Spielberg's film about a slave revolt in 1839. (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Arguing the World—The story is familiar: four brilliant young Jews met at City College of New York in the thirties, embraced socialism, broke with the Communists over Stalin, and splintered apart during the fifties and sixties, one to remain an independent thinker on the left, two to revolutionize American social theory, and one to become a founder of the neoconservative movement. Joseph Dorman's look at the careers of Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, and Irving Kristol isn't much from a formal point of view, but it does give this decidedly intellectual topic a human face. Dorman walks his subjects back to their childhood homes in the Bronx and on the Lower East Side and gets them to cough up memories: Glazer admits that the parents of his generation never, ever told their children "I love you"; Howe (who died in 1993) sadly recalls how the young Tom Hayden struck him as a creep. It's all very moving, and illuminating in a gossipy sort of way, but Dorman succeeds better than he probably intended in making a heated period in American history seem romantic and remote.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum; starting Jan. 7.)

As Good as It Gets—A romantic comedy directed and co-written (with Mark Andrus) by James Brooks ("Terms of Endearment," "Broadcast News"), in which an improbable trio—quartet, if you count the dog—overcomes a heap of troubles and finds collective happiness, sitcom style. The movie stars Jack Nicholson as a romance novelist with an obsessive-compulsive disorder and a seriously alienating manner, Helen Hunt as a waitress burdened with a young son who has a life-threatening disease, and Greg Kinnear as a gay painter with a sweet smile and no visible erotic attachments (not to mention the dog, a Brussels griffon who links the threesome together with his big-eyed adorableness). Brooks's gleaming manipulativeness and trendy pieties may make you grumpy; you keep expecting to hear a laugh track.—*Daphne Merkin* (1/5/98) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

Autumn Sonata (1978)—Eva (Liv Ullmann), a spiritually distraught, dowdy woman of perhaps thirty-five or forty, the wife of a pastor in rural Norway, invites Charlotte (Ingrid Bergman), her majestically worldly concert-pianist mother, to come for a visit. Then Eva goes at her mother with the impacted rage of a lifetime. The whole film is like the grievances of someone who has just gone into therapy—Mother did this to me, she did that to me, and that and that and that. Ullmann enters into Ingmar Bergman's disturbed emotions and puts them on the screen just as he desires: neither of them does the shaping job of an artist here. In Swedish.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 9 and Jan. 11.)

The Boxer—Daniel Day-Lewis stars as an Irish fighter rebuilding his life after serving time in a British prison, in a drama directed by Jim Sheridan, who co-wrote the screenplay with Terry George. (Beekman.)



At Film Forum (clockwise from top left), Nathan Glazer, Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, and Irving Kristol in Joseph Dorman's documentary "Arguing the World."

JOHN CUNEO

The Circus (1928)—The circus would seem to be a dream setting for a comic artist, and Charlie Chaplin's movie is wonderful when he plays with props and animals. But Chaplin doesn't link the Tramp effectively with the other circus acts. What's worse, the movie is held together by some limp melodrama involving the show's star equestrienne and her cruel father, the circus owner. Still, Chaplin devises great set pieces and astonishing expressions of childlike psychology: stuck in a cage with a sleeping lion, he tries to quiet a barking dog by sticking a finger in each of his own ears.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum 2; Jan. 10-11.)

Deconstructing Harry—Woody Allen's latest is an ugly retread of a pet theme: that an artist has no choice but to be a selfish monster. He defiantly casts himself as the loathsome Harry Block, a famous Jewish novelist who ridicules and cheats on women and then appropriates their life stories for his fiction. As a director, Allen seems to be shooting for a new style of ruthless honesty. The film's tone is almost abusively dark: Harry swears and tells crude jokes about blow jobs, and at times you expect him to turn to the camera and flip off the audience. But in the end he seems calculated to win an award for heroic suffering, and Allen seems to be mugging as much as ever for our love. Clear away the pseudoprofound talk about the immorality of genius and you're left with a bunch of celebrity cameos (by Demi Moore, Robin Williams, Elisabeth Shue, Billy Crystal, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Kirstie Alley) and outdated gags—Allen even trots out the one about Death, dressed in rags, knocking on the door.—*S.K.* (Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Criterion Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

Eve's Bayou—For her first film, the writer and director Kasi Lemmons attempts to adapt Tennessee Williams's Southern-gothic style to an African-American context. Eve, the heroine (Jurnee Smollett), a ten-year-old bourgeois Creole in late-fifties rural Louisiana, is trying to understand why her mother (an intense, elegant Lynn Whitfield) is so frigid and why her beloved father (a subdued Samuel L. Jackson) is addicted to fooling around. As long as the film sticks to Eve's point of view it's got a naïve charm; unfortunately, Lemmons mixes in Magic Realist fantasies of African voodoo and black-and-white sequences that feel less poetic than arty.—*S.K.* (Quad Cinema.)

Flubber—This remake of the 1961 fluff classic "The Absent-Minded Professor" achieves the impossible: the usually hyperactive Robin Williams is overshadowed here by special effects. John Hughes co-wrote the script (with Bill Walsh), packing it with a nasty violence reminiscent of his "Home Alone" series. Directed by Les Mayfield.—*S.K.* (Eastside Playhouse, Guild, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Full Monty—An amiable light comedy, directed by Peter Cattaneo, about six unemployed British steelworkers who mount an all-male strip show for cash. The script, by Simon Beaufoy, is clean and well developed. Each character is given his bit to do, and when the motley crew comes together the actors all work wonderfully with one another, finding a sexy, warm performance rhythm as they gyrate to some classic seventies disco. Two actors—Mark Addy, who plays an overweight, insecure worker, and Robert Carlyle, as the ringleader—are sensational.—*Bruce Diones* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Gold Rush (1925)—He enters, "pursued by a bear"—the man who for generations of filmgoers has been the embodiment of "the little fellow": humanity. In this extraordinarily sweet and graceful comedy, Chaplin is the weak and helpless perfect gentleman in the Klondike world of bears and brutes; yet his gallantry wins him the gold and the girl, too. Produced, written, and directed by Chaplin. Silent.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; Jan. 12.)

Good Will Hunting—A drama written by and starring Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, about a troubled young man with a photographic memory. Directed by Gus Van Sant. Also starring Robin Williams and Minnie Driver. (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea West, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and State.)

Holiday (1938)—In the thirties, Katharine Hepburn's wit and nonconformity made ordinary heroines seem mushy, and her angular beauty made the round-faced ingénues look piggy and stupid. Here she is in her archetypal role, as the rich tomboy Linda in Philip Barry's romantic comedy. She had understudied the role in 1928 on Broadway and had used it for her screen test, and she was the moving force behind this graceful film version, which Donald Ogden Stewart and Sidney Buchman tailored for her and which George Cukor directed. In the pivotal role of a man who wants a holiday in order to discover his values, Cary Grant manages to make a likable and plausible character out of a dramatist's stratagem.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 9.)

Jackie Brown—Pam Grier stars as a double-dealing smuggler, in Quentin Tarantino's adaptation of the Elmore Leonard novel "Rum Punch." (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 2, Gotham Cinema, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Kundun—Martin Scorsese's chronicle of the early years of Tenzin Gyatso, the current Dalai Lama. (Lincoln Square.)

L.A. Confidential—Curtis Hanson's new thriller, set in Los Angeles in the early fifties, is about a group of cops who between them cover the full moral range, from the uptight integrity of Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) to the four-star sadism of Bud White (Russell Crowe). The plot, adapted from the James Ellroy novel, is both murky and tangled, yet the movie never bogs down. Hanson paces the tale with ease, decorating it with one neat performance after another: James Cromwell as the smiling police chief, David Strathairn as an oily pimp, Kim Basinger as one of his prize charges, and, better still, Kevin Spacey as a "celebrity crime-stopper" who gets dragged into the dark and dirty.—*Anthony Lane* (9/22/97) (Art Greenwich Twin, Lincoln Square, and New York Twin.)

Limelight (1952)—Chaplin's sentimental and high-minded view of theatre and himself. As Calvero the old, impoverished English clown, he appears at a gala benefit and shows the unbelievers who think him finished that he is still the greatest, and then dies in the wings as the applause fades; this is surely the richest hunk of self-gratification since Huck and Tom attended their own funeral—and Chaplin serves it up straight. At one point Calvero awaits a young ballerina (acted with considerable charm by Claire Bloom, and danced with authority by Melissa Hayden). In the darkened theatre after she has performed, he says to her, "My dear, you are a true artist, a true artist," and the emphasis is on *his* eyes, *his* depth of feeling. With Sydney Chaplin, Nigel Bruce, and, all too briefly, Buster Keaton.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; Jan. 10-11.)

Man of Aran (1934)—Robert Flaherty gave two years of his life to making this film, and left the Aran Islands with a truly exalted work—the greatest film tribute to man's struggle against hostile nature. The Atlantic, which sweeps in all the way from America, lashes the cliffs of Aran with an almost malignant ferocity. Only thirty miles from Galway, civilized people live on islands of rock so bare that they must gather seaweed to plant their potatoes in. Perhaps because of the mixture of extreme courage and extreme simplicity in the lives of these people, who act out incidents based on past occurrences, the film achieves a true epic quality—a celebration of heroic traditions.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 11.)

Ma Vie en Rose—The story of a little boy (Georges du Fresne) convinced he is a little girl. Directed by Alain Berliner. In French. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Monsieur Verdoux (1947)—Chaplin as a Parisian bank clerk—a dapper Bluebeard—in a comedy with attempted Shavian ironies. This private entrepreneur who charms rich widows and murders them for their money feels guiltless, and contrasts what he does with what governments do in war. "Numbers sanctify," he says. Chaplin is more talented at carrying out his pantomime bits than in the talky, anti-war passages, which are meant to be complexly unsettling and come across as dubious and even rather lamebrained. The casting is not all it might be, with the glorious exception of Martha Raye as Annabella, who is so full of low-comedy life that, despite all Verdoux's calculations, and one attempt after another, he fails to kill her. Produced, written, and directed by Chaplin.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; Jan. 8-9.)

MouseHunt—A comedy about brothers (Nathan Lane and Lee Evans) who inherit an old house and its troublesome rodent. Directed by Gore Verbinski. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 64th and 2nd, and Waverly.)

Oscar and Lucinda—A romantic gambling tale, starring Ralph Fiennes and Cate Blanchett and directed by Gillian Armstrong. Laura Jones's screenplay is based on Peter Carey's 1988 novel. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 72nd Street East.)

The Postman—Kevin Costner directed and stars in this vision of a post-apocalyptic America. (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Riding the Rails (1997)—The teen-age freight-train riders of the Depression hoped to escape the hardship or the dreariness that had befallen their families; some wanted work, some just adventure. This documentary tells their story, with the help of ten eyewitnesses who hopped boxcars, slept in hobo jungles, bummed meals, and did odd jobs until they joined the Civilian Conservation Corps or the W.P.A. or military service or went back home. The co-directors, Michael Uys and Lexy Lovell, open up a fresh subject without either simplifying or inflating it; their mixture of newsreel footage and straight-to-the-camera reminiscence is both tough-minded and briskly poignant. The images of trains rattling through the countryside balance the talking heads and convey the free-floating romantic feeling that never completely left even those who felt scarred by the experience. What's most moving and intriguing, though, is how seasoned and wary the teen-agers in the shots from the thirties look, and how spry and engaged those in their seventies and eighties still are.—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 8-9.)

Salt of the Earth (1954)—The raw material for this social-realist movie, made in a semi-documentary style, is a 1951-52 strike of Mexican-American zinc miners in New Mexico. The picture was sponsored by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (expelled from the C.I.O. in 1950 as Communist dominated), made by blacklisted filmmakers, and financed by money "borrowed from liberal Americans." The miners are supposedly striking for equality with the "Anglos," but the strike is not a

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

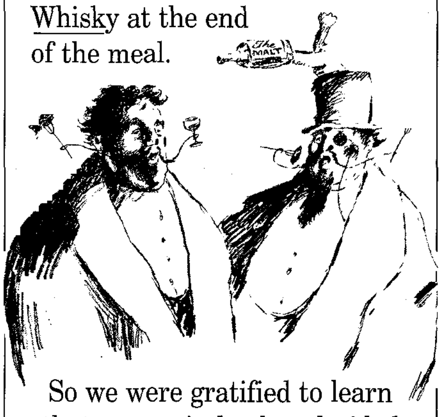
WE READ BUBBLE-EYED

in the London Standard the account of two Frenchmen who sat down to a gargantuan feast in La Rochelle's Rabelais Restaurant.

The fourteen hour, £1,500 meal opened with canapes of Sevruga caviar, foie gras, marinated salmon: progressed into emerald oysters: followed up with raw foie gras marinated in Montrachet: and pursued with a litany of crayfish, truffles, filet de boeuf en croute, salad, cherre, patisserie, sorbets ...

As for refreshment, the tally at the end of the repast was two bottles of 1969 champagne, ten bottles of Montrachet 1982, a Chateau Margaux 1966, and an 1895 Armagnac.

Of course with such a *'Grand Bouffe'* behind them, our gourmands could scarcely have hoped to appreciate the sherry-gold finesse of a 25 year-old The Macallan Malt Whisky at the end of the meal.



So we were gratified to learn that, very wisely, they decided *to start with it.*

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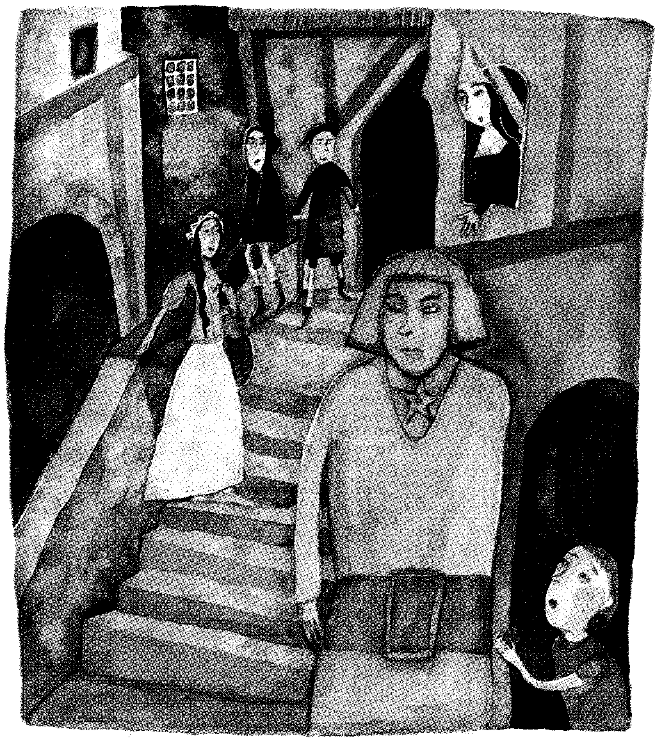
bargaining weapon for definite limited objectives. It's inflated with lessons, suggestions, and implications. These strikers are always teaching each other little constructive lessons, and their dialogue is blown up to the rank of folk wisdom. Directed by Herbert J. Biberman; written by Michael Wilson.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 12-13.)

The Sweet Hereafter—An exquisitely sober movie by Atom Egoyan, based on the novel by Russell Banks. Ian Holm holds the screen with volcanic force as a big-city lawyer trying to bring a class-action suit on behalf of a small blue-collar town in the wake of a school-bus accident. The cast is uniformly good, and Sarah Polley, as a paralyzed survivor of the crash, is extraordinary.—*D.M.* (11/24/97) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Titanic—At well over three hours, James Cameron's grand new picture has plenty of romance to get through before it breaks the vessel in half. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the freewheeling Jack, who wins a steerage ticket and finds himself falling for the wealthy Rose (Kate Winslet), to the disapproval of her mother (Frances Fisher) and her brute of a fiancé (Billy Zane). The social animus of the story, like its imaginative majesty, is Dickensian; this all feels like two hundred million dollars well spent.—*A.L.* (12/15/97) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Tomorrow Never Dies—A media mogul (Jonathan Pryce) is the villain in the newest James Bond film, starring Pierce Brosnan as 007. Directed by Roger Spottiswoode. (Chelsea West, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Wag the Dog—Barry Levinson's very savvy comedy about a very insider subject, the politics of spin control, from a screenplay by David Mamet (with Hilary Henkin as co-writer) which spews out innuendo. The premise, conceived with a shrewd awareness that there's no audience quite so lemminglike as one composed of cynical urban sophisticates, involves a Presidential incumbent caught in a sex scandal less than two weeks before Election Day. Robert De Niro plays a Machiavellian spinmeister who devises a fake war and hires a Hollywood producer (Dustin Hoffman) to orchestrate it. The movie is essentially one long joke about the American way of hype: it's very clever, but its tone of gleeful sendup never takes you beyond what you already know. Hoffman's role is the meatiest he's had since "Tootsie," and he gives it a complex, almost architectonic reading. With Anne Heche as a squeaky-clean Presidential aide.—*D.M.* (1/5/98) (Cinema I, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)



At the Walter Reade Theatre, Paul Wegener's "The Golem," part of the Seventh Annual New York Jewish Film Festival.

GISELLE POTTER

The Winter Guest—In a small, frozen-over coastal town in Scotland, a mother and daughter (played by Emma Thompson and her real mother, Phyllida Law) spend a day together arguing and chatting, going from mutual exasperation to sudden bouts of fierce affection. The film is a character study imbued with the tender realism of a William Trevor story, and its slow, watchful quality makes everything seem worth paying attention to: the wonderful, washed-out colors of the town, the mournful cawing of seagulls, the pair of elderly women who follow funerals. The dialogue is like a translucent skin through which we make out the shifting play of emotions. Directed, with a great calmness of focus, by the actor Alan Rickman (who co-wrote the script with Sharman Macdonald), and featuring superb performances by both mother and daughter (Thompson restrains her tendency to oversell her characters), this picture has the lingering radiance of art.—*D.M.* (1/5/98) (Paris.)

ALSO PLAYING

AFTERGLOW: Angelika Film Center and Regency. . . . **ALIEN RESURRECTION** (reviewed in our issue of 12/1/97): Criterion Center. . . . **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **ANASTASIA:** Criterion Center, 59th Street East Cinema, and Waverly. . . . **BEAN** (11/24/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BOOGIE NIGHTS** (10/13/97): Village East Cinemas. . . . **FAST, CHEAP & OUT OF CONTROL:** Film Forum 3. . . . **FOR RICHER OR POORER:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Waverly. . . . **HOME ALONE 3:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE ICE STORM** (9/29/97): Quad Cinema. . . . **I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **IN & OUT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE JACKAL:** Criterion Center. . . . **JOHN GRISHAM'S THE RAINMAKER:** 62nd & Broadway. . . . **MR. MAGOO:** 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 3, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **MORTAL KOMBAT: ANNIHILATION:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **RED CORNER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SCREAM 2:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **STARSHIP TROOPERS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE WINGS OF THE DOVE** (11/10/97): Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and 59th Street East Cinema.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A series of Charlie Chaplin films. Jan. 7: Two programs of short films. . . . Jan. 8-9: "Monsieur Verdoux" (†) and "A Woman of Paris" (1923; silent). . . . Jan. 10-11: "Limelight" (†) and "The Circus" (†). . . . Jan. 12: "The Gold Rush" (†) and short films. . . . Jan. 13: Two programs of short films.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films starring Ingrid Bergman. Jan. 8 at 2:30 and Jan. 10 at 5: "Joan of Arc at the Stake" (1954, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian, English, Spanish, and French). . . . Jan. 8 at 6 and Jan. 9 at 2:30: "Voyage to Italy" (1954, Rossellini; in Italian). . . . Jan. 9 at 6 and Jan. 11 at 5: "Autumn Sonata" (†). . . . Jan. 9 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 2:30: "The Turn of the Screw" (1959, John Frankenheimer). . . . Jan. 11 at 2: "Intermezzo: A Love Story" (1939, Gregory Ratoff). . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 6:30 and Jan. 9 at 3: "Riding the Rails" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: "Holiday" (†). . . . ¶ A program of Italian films; in Italian, with English subtitles. Jan. 10 at 2 and Jan. 11 at 2:30: "Mille Ottocento Sessanta" (1933, Alessandro Blaserti). . . . Jan. 10 at 5: "Don Giovanni" (1979, Joseph Losey). . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 2:30 and Jan. 13 at 6: "Shock Corridor" (1963, Samuel Fuller). . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 6 and Jan. 13 at 2:30: "Salt of the Earth" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 6:30: "Hide and Seek" (1996), directed by Su Friedrich, who will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 6: Films made by the Biograph Company, 1905-11.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films by French directors; most in French, with English subtitles. Jan. 7 at 2 and 6 and Jan. 8 at 4: "Return to India" (1996, Bernard Favré). . . . Jan. 7 at 4 and 8 and Jan. 8 at 2: "The 317th Platoon" (1965, Pierre Schoendorffer). . . . Jan. 9 at 2 and 6:30 and Jan. 10 at 4: "The War Without a Name" (1991, Bertrand Tavernier). . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 6:30: "Vince and the Trailer Park" (1997, Bob Arons). . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 2: "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" (1971, Mel Stuart). . . . ¶ The Seventh Annual New York Jewish Film Festival. Jan. 11 at 2: "The Golem" (1920, Paul Wegener; a German silent film). . . . Jan. 11 at 4 and Jan. 12 at 8:45: "Best Man" (1997, Ira Wohl). . . . Jan. 11 at 6:30 and Jan. 13 at 2 and 6: "Would I Lie to You?" (1997, Thomas Gilou; in French). . . . Jan. 11 at 8:45 and Jan. 12 at 2: "Soleil" (1997, Roger Hanin; in French). . . . Jan. 12 at 4: "Sterne" (1959, Konrad Wolf; in German). . . . Jan. 12 at 6:30: "Fragments * Jerusalem, Parts 1 and 2" (1986-96, Ron Havilio). . . . Jan. 13 at 4: "The Boy with Green Hair" (1948, Joseph Losey). . . . Jan. 13 at 8:15: "Fragments * Jerusalem, Part 3."

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Jan. 11 at 2: "Man of Aran" (†). . . . Jan. 11 at 3:30: "How the Myth Was Made" (1978, George Stoney), a documentary about the film "Man of Aran."

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—Jan. 9-11 at 12:30: "Catwalk" (1995, Richard Leacock). . . . Jan. 9-11 at 3:30: "Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion" (1997, David Mirkin).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 11 at 7, the feature will be "Harlow" (1965, Alex Segal), with Carroll Baker.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 13 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Le Samouraï" (1967, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French), with Alain Delon and Nathalie Delon.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Jan. 31: "Hustling" (1975, Joseph Sargent), with Lee Remick and Jill Clayburgh. (Showings Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2 and 4; Thursdays and Fridays at 2, 4, and 6.)

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through Jan. 8: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti; in Italian). . . . From Jan. 9: "Shivers" (1975, David Cronenberg).

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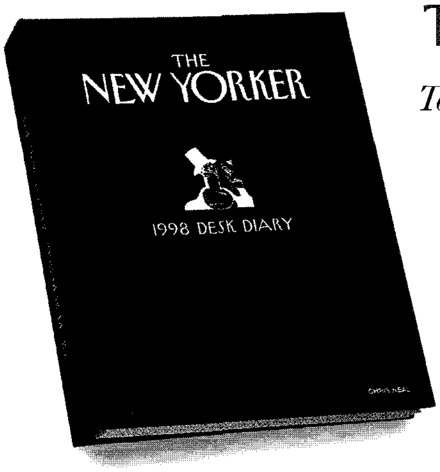

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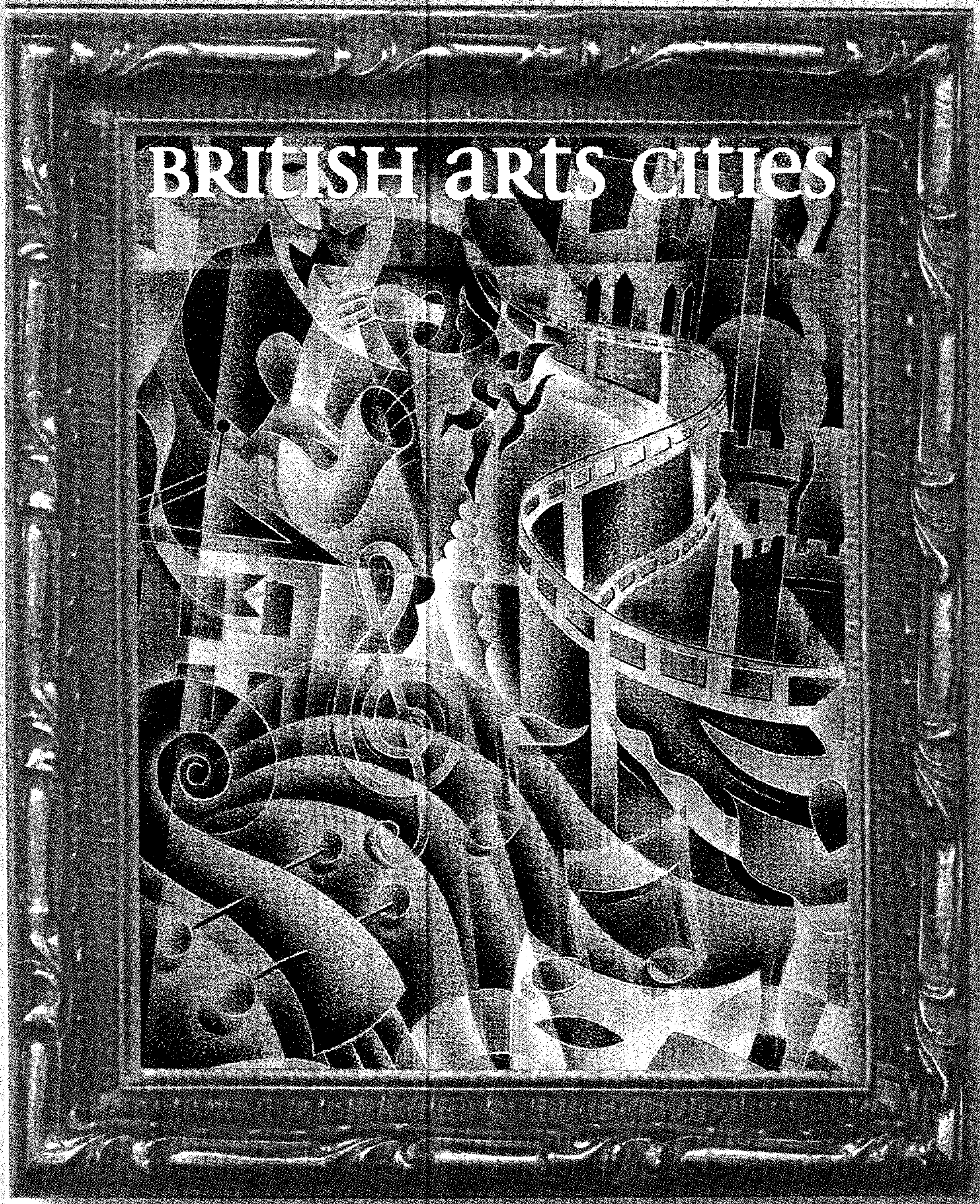

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES DEPT.

Did the New York Public Library let some history slip through its fingers?

WHEN Paul LeClerc, the president of the New York Public Library, dispatched his "1997 Year-End Report" to Friends of the Library, Michael Zinman was poised to respond. Zinman, a New Yorker whose day job is trading heavy earthmoving equipment, devotes his most passionate energies to collecting rare books and Americana. He regards himself as a friend of the library, which, during its current five-hundred-million-dollar fund-raising campaign, is presumably eager to cultivate as many chums as possible. Under the rubric "The Year Ahead," LeClerc's letter noted that "foremost among" the upcoming exhibitions will be a commemoration of the centennial of the Spanish-American War. Zinman wrote back, informing LeClerc that he happened to own "a number of items . . . of seminal importance" related to the war—all available for loan, provided that they be labelled "Courtesy Collection of Michael Zinman, formerly in the Collection of the New York Public Library."

Last spring, a dealer whom Zinman declines to identify sold him, for a dollar a pound, about five hundred cartons of printed pamphlets—mainly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but with plenty of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century stuff mixed in, that the library had deaccessioned. Ever since, Zinman and several acquaintances in the rare-book trade have been preoccupied with why—and, no less significantly, when—one of the world's handful of premier research libraries let this material go out the door.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

How it came to pass is no mystery. During the nineteen-seventies, a federally funded program resulted in a massive amount of so-called preservation microfilming—i.e., detaching the pamphlets from their bindings and recording their "intellectual contents." What to do with the artifacts themselves, many printed on brittle high-acid-content paper? Some originals were offered to libraries, but the bulk evidently ended up in the hands of a single dealer who, Zinman says, bought the lot "essentially for the price of scrap paper."

Coping with the protocols and logistics of preservation prompts plenty of earnest hand-wringing among librarians and stirs questions that lie at the heart of the New York Public Library's mission as a research facility. In 1981, a book dealer in New Haven (and a good friend of Zinman's) named William Reese bought, at a small country book fair, a rare pamphlet from Texas. After consulting a reference text and learning that the only known copy resided in the N.Y.P.L., Reese called a curator to report its theft. The curator hemmed and hawed and explained that it had been microfilmed and deaccessioned. When Reese remonstrated, he was assured that his objections were moot, because the deaccessioning had ceased. (Having paid five hundred dollars for the pamphlet, Reese sold it to another library for more than two thousand.)

"Oh, heavens, no," the N.Y.P.L.'s deputy director of research libraries replied recently when I asked whether microfilmed pamphlets might still be leaving the building. She explained that "what gets hauled away is literally in no condition that anyone can use." Nevertheless, both Zinman and Reese are convinced that the discarding of valuable works has never stopped. Among the pamphlets Zinman bought was a wrapper bearing the N.Y.P.L. imprint and a stamp indicating that it was microfilmed in September, 1994. Not long ago, Reese acquired, from Zinman's dealer, a collection of rare early legislative journals that the dealer told him had been freshly deaccessioned.

"Reading a document on microfilm removes the viewer to a degree from the artifact," Zinman says. "There's a transcendental distinction between holding in your hands a piece of history and looking at it on a screen."

"Even if you accept the idea that it's O.K. to just film everything," Reese adds, "they should have at least gotten some decent money for what they threw out."

When asked last week about the library's deaccessioning habits, LeClerc stated, "I'm asking for a complete review of all our policies and practices relative to our preservation-microfilming efforts."

As a holiday greeting card of sorts, Zinman sent to each of the library's trustees a poster bearing reproductions of bookplates from collections that during the past twenty years have been "trashed." Along with the poster, Zinman enclosed an invoice for a single pamphlet from the now dispersed A. G. Spalding Collection of historical baseball artifacts. According to the invoice, last October the Library of Congress paid six thousand five hundred dollars for an 1859 copy of "The Base

Ball Player's Pocket Companion," a first edition of the first published work devoted exclusively to baseball. A tiny leap of faith on the part of the trustees is required to accept Zinman's representation that the invoice records a genuine transaction; it is, after all, a photocopy. —MARK SINGER

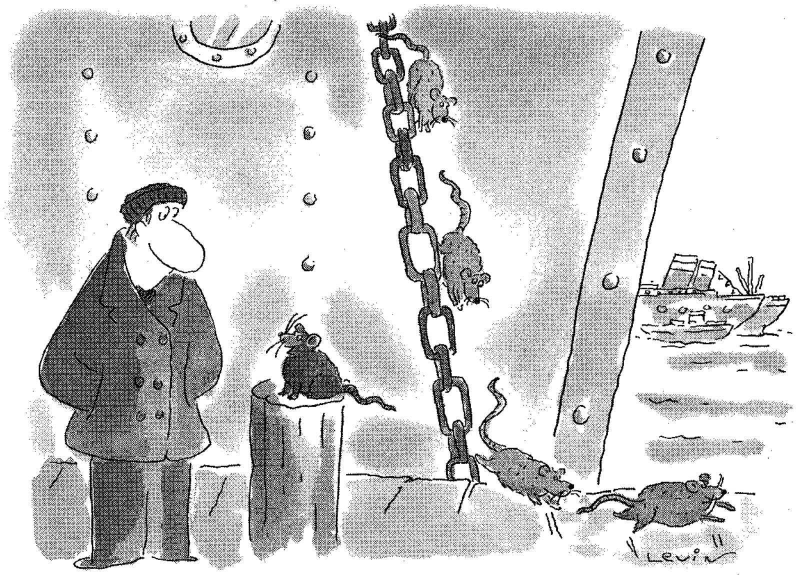
NERD FILE

A computer pioneer comes out of the past to fix the year 2000 glitch.

BOB BEMER can't program a VCR and is baffled by Windows, but he believes he has the solution to a disaster of untold proportions: the so-called millennium bug, which, on January 1, 2000, could cause many of the world's computer systems to crash.

Pimply computer whizzes don't take Bob Bemer or his proposed cure very seriously, but that's because most don't know who he is. The first I.B.M. employee profiled in these pages (in 1957), Bemer was responsible for more computing breakthroughs than just about anybody, including ASCII text—the universal standard for computer characters—and the escape sequence, a complicated maneuver that controls laser printing. In 1979, in an article in the now defunct magazine *Interface Age*, Bemer predicted the upcoming Big Bug. Having Bemer return now to correct a deeply rooted electronic-data problem is like having the Wright Brothers back to scrutinize the T.W.A. crash. Bemer, who favors bolo ties, is seventy-seven, and that makes him ancient history in a field in which, if you're older than twenty-five, you're toast.

Bemer says that he knows exactly how to fix mainframe computers' internal-calendar systems, many of which currently designate years with two digits and can't tell if "00" means 2000 or 1900. "Essentially, we designed the car—we know we can drive it," Bemer said the other day, sounding like Ross Perot in campaign mode. "But now we've got to take this into the Sahara." He admits to a little guilt, having helped design COBOL, the world's dominant mainframe programming language, in the first place.



"There's nothing wrong with the ship. We just got a better offer."

When Bemer presented his idea to companies such as E.D.S., the information-services giant, and the investment bank Morgan Stanley, he got a polite "No thanks" or, at best, a "Let's wait and see." Most companies are approaching the problem by painstakingly rewriting billions of lines of highly complex computer language. Bemer's solution, which he calls Vertex 2000, is much more elegant, boring down to the level of "object code," which the computer understands directly.

This month, Bemer and his Dallas-based B.M.R. Software will formally announce Vertex 2000. And at least one big company is seriously considering embracing his rescue plan: Bell Atlantic is running a test of Bemer's product. "We think his solution is real," Skip Patterson, the executive director of Bell Atlantic's Year 2000 Program Office, says. "It's simple and it's quick. It's the most highly automated solution we've found, and that's its real attraction."

Bemer says that his scheme costs only a fraction of current anti-bug estimates, which run into the hundreds of billions of dollars. "If we've got to give it away, we'll do it," he says. "Of course," he adds, grinning, "that's not our plan." After fifteen years in retirement, he could use the money—and the recognition. "You take the escape sequence. I never got a nickel for that. It went into the public domain." This time will be different, he says. "I'll see you on the History Channel." —RUSS BAKER

THE CREATIVE LIFE

Artists, starving and otherwise, anoint a new-old headquarters in Chelsea.

EVERY art scene gets the hangout it deserves. In the fifties, there was the Cedar Tavern, a hole-in-the-wall in Greenwich Village where Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning turned drinking into a competitive sport. The Cedar was a symbol of bohemia's last flourish, while Max's Kansas City, a steakhouse near Union Square, catered to the sixties cool school, reserving its back room for Warhol and his entourage. In the eighties, the art world headed down to Tribeca to toast itself at the Odeon, nowadays known as the Odious.

And in the nineties? The new spot is the Empire Diner, a glitz-free, gemütlich place tucked among the warehouses of West Chelsea—right in the middle of Manhattan's new gallery district. On most any afternoon, art types with spiked hair, long hair, or no hair at all can be found hunched at the counter, patiently receiving their caffeine allotments. That may not sound like the height of debauchery, but it does capture the nineties art scene, whose mantra could be "Please, let's just have the mesclun green salad ($4.95) and skip the existential despair."

The Empire's population, in truth, is composed of more than artists and their ilk. It also includes the Art-Tour Ladies—suburban matrons who once confined their cultural outings to Broadway matinées and Met exhibitions but now visit the galleries as well, arriving on buses and staying with their groups as they stand in front of video screens and cheerfully contemplate, say, copulating satyrs.

"These ladies run us ragged," Diane Vuletich, a waitress at the Empire, said the other day. "You get thirty of them, and they all want cappuccino. They split sandwiches, because they're on diets." A slim woman with stringy blond hair and a fierce, *je ne regrette rien* expression, she leaned over the counter to tell a joke. Question: What did the waitress say to the women from Long Island? Answer: Is *anything* O.K.?

This cracked up the eminent abstract painter Sean Scully, known for his odes to the stripe. He was seated at the counter with his friend Ted Bonin, who opened a gallery in Chelsea in the fall. Scully is a large man who holds a black belt in karate, and his total order, a glass of fizzy water, seemed improbably tame. "Artists have to drink less," he said. "Now drinking damages your liver, but in the fifties it didn't."

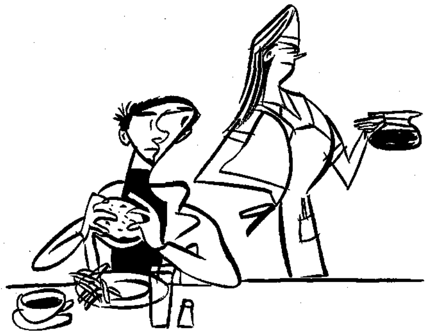
Real-estate people like to describe Chelsea as the new SoHo. Every week, it seems, another empty garage metamorphoses into an empyreal gallery. Even so, no major artists or movements have emerged from the Chelsea scene, whose elegantly renovated spaces tend to overshadow the art on view. The Empire, a classic Deco diner, complete with an authentic winged clock, can hold its own architecturally.

Jack Doenias, who owns the place, says the diner's peak hours have recently shifted from late night to late morning, as clubgoers give way to gallerygoers. An affable, low-key man of sixty, Doenias previously worked as the manager of publications at the Museum of Modern Art, which makes him quaintly overqualified for his current publishing project: a list of Chelsea exhibitions distributed for free at the restaurant.

When he was asked if he had noticed any pattern to art-world eating habits, Doenias said, "Lentil burgers are our most popular item. Many of the art people are vegetarian."

They include Sandro Chia, the eighties art star turned nineties monk. He was sitting at a table by himself, a strapping man in a black leather jacket, his fingers coated with sky-blue pastel dust. Chia said that he converted to vegetarianism about a decade ago, a dramatic turnabout for someone whose former beef-munching ways once inspired the Odeon to nickname a dish on its menu Sandro Chia's Steak au Poivre.

If the Empire Diner decides to start naming dishes after artists, which dish will Chia claim? The artist laughed and replied, "Probably cornflakes with low-fat milk." —DEBORAH SOLOMON



THE BOARDS

A new British play that dares not speak its name.

THE *Times* likes to think of itself both as the newspaper of record and as an arbiter of standards, which, when you come to think about it, is an impossible straddle. The folks at the New York Theatre Workshop have had good reason to think about it recently, as they await the *Times'* reception of their new play, "Shopping and Fucking," which opens early next month. The play, written by Mark Ravenhill, has been an enormous West End hit, which would usually mean lots of attention from the *Times*, but the early coverage has been, if not halfhearted, then half titled. The paper's fall preview some months ago featured the play under the perplexing title "Shopping and . . . ," which was vaguely reminiscent of one of the *Times'* new sections, and gave no hint that this is a raw urban drama about a group of anomic young English people who consume too much television and junk food and thereby demonstrate the ugly pervasiveness of materialism in contemporary life. Nor will the *Times* accept an advertisement for the play as titled. "So much for their younger, hipper readership," James Nicola, the theatre's director, grumbled the other day.

He might, of course, just have said, "Well, . . . them," since the play, even with a truncated name, seems bound to attract attention. A poster campaign is planned. "We don't usually have the resources to do that," Nicola explained, "but the title really lends itself to that." The posters will be Zip Code appropriate: in the theatre's own neighborhood, East Fourth Street and the Bowery—where they take posters down for *not* having obscenities in them—"we will use the title full out," Nicola says. "Though there are other neighborhoods where it might not be so fine." Such as? "Probably any neighborhood other than this."

The play's name is a publishing term of art, referring to the Jackie Collins–Judith Krantz–Sidney Sheldon genre of popular fiction (sometimes more politely called "sex and shopping" books). For publications that balk at accepting ads with vulgarities, Nicola is proposing the alternative "Shopping and ****ing," which, though apparently too racy for the *Times*, is the form adopted by the relatively prudish London *Times*.

If propriety demands, there is a long tradition of euphemisms which the New York Theatre Workshop might draw upon. "There's 'fuss,' as in 'Don't fuss with me, li'l man,'" says Jesse Sheidlower, the author of "The F-word," a history of this particular obscenity. "And 'mess,' or 'muck.'" In "The Naked and the Dead," which was published in 1948, Norman Mailer changed every "fuck" to "fug," which sounded ridiculous even then.

No such stratagems seem necessary to Richard Kornberg, the play's New York publicist, off whose tongue the full title is fairly rolling. "We are getting so much attention with this," he said. "We were joking the other day that we should change the names of the other shows we represent, like 'Jekyll and Fucking Hyde.'" And he's already fantasizing a "Rent"-like future. (That Tony Award-winning Broadway smash also began at the New York Theatre Workshop.) "'BEST STRAIGHT PLAY: "SHOPPING AND FUCKING."' I can't wait to hear how they will say it." —REBECCA MEAD

THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

THE FORCE OF AN IDEA

Until recently, Bill Gates and Microsoft seemed unstoppable. Now it's a different story. What happened?

BY JOHN CASSIDY

IN a way, Bill Gates's current troubles with the Justice Department grew out of an economics seminar that took place thirteen years ago, in December of 1984, at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The guest speaker was Brian Arthur, a little-known Stanford economist who was having difficulty getting his articles published in professional journals. The paper Arthur now read—"Competing Technologies and Lock-in by Historical Small Events: The Dynamics of Choice Under Increasing Returns"—drew a strong, and largely hostile, response. One Harvard economist, Richard Zeckhauser, stood up afterward and said, "If you are right, capitalism can't work." A few months later, when Arthur read the same paper to a gathering in Moscow, an equally eminent Russian economist declaimed, "Your argument cannot be true!" Such was Arthur's challenge to economic orthodoxy that it would be another five years before he succeeded in getting this paper published.

The case against Gates represents the Justice Department's new thinking on monopolies in the age of technology.

STEVE BRODNER

Since the Second World War, economists have spent most of their time articulating the reasons that free markets work so well, and arguing that government intervention in the economy is usually not only unnecessary but often downright harmful. Their argument, which harks back to Adam Smith, was rigorously developed in the "general equilibrium" models of the nineteen-fifties and vociferously promoted by the Chicago School of the sixties and seventies, whose members included Milton Friedman, Gary Becker, and Ronald Coase, Nobel laureates all. The Chicago doctrine was translated into the policy arena by Robert Bork, whose 1978 book, "The Antitrust Paradox," became an important intellectual prop for the generation of conservative jurists who were appointed to the federal courts by Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

Arthur's paper argued that the underlying assumptions of the Chicago School simply don't apply to large parts of the economy, especially the high-technology and communications industries. In these fast-growing sectors, Arthur said, there is no guarantee that the market, left to its own devices, will select the best products and maximize benefits to the consumer. Instead, he maintained, inferior products can beat out superior products merely because of happenstance—by being first to the store shelf, say—and they can remain in a dominant position for a long time. Small events, such as a misleading marketing campaign, can be magnified into big changes in sales. And some firms are likely to establish, through predatory tactics or mere luck, lucrative and lasting monopolies, which stifle the very competition that free-market advocates swear by. In those instances, government intervention may be needed to restore competition.

When I met Arthur recently, in Washington at Ralph Nader's two-day conference on Microsoft, he turned out to be a gray-haired native of Belfast who speaks softly and views the real world with a detached sense of amusement. "I was saying all this during the Cold War, so ideology got in the way," he said, smiling broadly. "I spent about ten years in the wilderness." He didn't seem bitter about this fate, which was probably inevitable, given the revolutionary nature of his theory. "It stands a great deal of standard economics on its head," he said with another smile.

Arthur eventually emerged from the wilderness. His arguments couldn't be dismissed as "informal" or "anecdotal"—the customary derisive tags for heterodox economic ideas—because they were expressed in exactly the sort of dense mathematics favored by the editors of the *American Economic Review*. Arthur had taken degrees in electrical engineering and mathematics before turning to the dismal science, and he still refers to himself as an "applied mathematician" rather than as an economist. He is now a professor at the Sante Fe Institute, where physicists, computer scientists, and economists are applying the nascent science of complexity—which examines how fairly simple dynamic systems can produce incredibly complicated outcomes—to subjects as diverse as geography, inequality, and finance.

Gradually, a number of economists began to take Arthur's conclusions seriously. Some of them—including Garth Saloner, of Stanford, Joseph Farrell, of Berkeley, and Steven Salop, of Georgetown—went on to develop game-theory models that demonstrated how powerful firms could exploit the peculiar nature of high-tech markets to the disadvantage of their opponents. Finally, even figures outside the economics profession started to take notice. "At first, people said, 'Your theory may be theoretically valid, but there's no actual evidence of it in the economy,' " Arthur recalled. "I thought about that, and said, 'No, no, no. The whole high-tech sector operates in this way.' When I started to say that, I discovered it had a lot of resonance in Silicon Valley. People I talked to there just nodded wisely, grinned, and said, 'This is how we see it, too, but we've never seen it written down and formalized.' "

ONE of the people who picked up on Arthur's work was Gary Reback, a Palo Alto antitrust lawyer who represents several of Microsoft's rivals. During the nineteen-eighties, Reback came to despair of the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission, and the courts, all of which he believed were in thrall to Chicago School economics. In 1995, Reback asked Arthur and Saloner to contribute to a white paper that he was drawing up for the Justice Department to protest Microsoft's abortive takeover bid for Intuit, a company that manufactures software for personal finance. Ever since 1981, when Microsoft provided the MS-DOS operating system for the first I.B.M. personal computer, the firm's rivals have claimed that it uses anti-competitive tactics, such as issuing restrictive contracts to its customers, announcing software products that don't yet exist, tying products to each other in such a way that customers have to buy both of them, and deliberately making its products incompatible with those of its rivals. Reback's white paper reviewed some of these charges, related them to recent academic work on the subject, and concluded with a stark warning about the future of the on-line information world: "The markets today consist almost entirely of American competitors. But without government intervention, Microsoft will in short order crush this competition."

Gates has always denied acting in a predatory manner, and during the nineteen-eighties his rivals' complaints evoked little sympathy in Washington. Finally, in 1990, the F.T.C. decided to investigate Microsoft, but three years later four F.T.C. commissioners deadlocked on whether to bring legal action. The Justice Department belatedly took up the case, and in July of 1994 Microsoft agreed to a consent decree with the government in which the firm pledged to stop charging computer manufacturers, such as Compaq and Hewlett-Packard, a license fee based on the total number of personal computers they shipped, regardless of whether those computers contained Microsoft software. (In effect, the contracts forced computer manufacturers who wanted to install non-Microsoft operating systems, such as DR-DOS or I.B.M.'s OS/2, to pay two licensing fees—one to Microsoft and one to the other company.) Microsoft didn't admit to any wrongdoing, and Gates said publicly that he regarded the consent decree as a minor setback that would have little impact on how he conducted his business. Even now, with about ninety per cent of the market for personal-computer operating systems, Microsoft denies being a monopolist. "We have never admitted to it, nor has any court ever found that to be the case," William Neukom, Microsoft's top lawyer, told me. "In this industry, we do not have the sort of monopoly power where one can reduce the supply and increase the price to the point of extracting monopoly rent. It's the reverse. People are getting better technology at lower prices."

In October, the Justice Department asserted that Microsoft, by forcing computer manufacturers to include its Internet Explorer (a piece of software used for viewing—and retrieving information from—the World Wide Web) with every copy of its Windows 95 operating system, had violated a term of the 1994 consent decree which barred the company from tying any "other product" to the purchase of its operating system. Microsoft vigorously opposed the government's argument, cit-

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VILLE ET VILLAGE

“Don’t forget to take a handful of our complimentary antibiotics on your way out.”

ing another clause in the consent decree that expressly allowed it to develop “integrated products,” and a bitter legal and public-relations battle ensued.

Last month, Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson, of the United States District Court in Washington, surprised many observers by issuing a preliminary injunction in the government’s favor. In ordering Microsoft to stop bundling Internet Explorer with Windows 95, the judge didn’t say the firm had violated the consent decree, the language of which he pronounced ambiguous, but he declared that Microsoft was indeed a monopolist, and suggested that its behavior may have violated the antitrust laws. “The probability that Microsoft will not only continue to reinforce its operating system monopoly by its licensing practices, but might also acquire another monopoly in the Internet browser market, is simply too great to tolerate indefinitely until the issue is finally resolved,” Judge Jackson wrote. Microsoft appealed his ruling, arguing that it was virtually impossible to remove Internet Explorer from Windows 95. The case rapidly turned into an imbroglio, with the Justice Department accusing the company of failing to obey the court’s order, Microsoft accusing the government of being “poorly informed,” and Judge Jackson using a laptop in the courtroom to demonstrate how easy it would be to remove the Internet Explorer browser from Windows 95.

The legal skirmishing is set to resume next week, but the ultimate outcome of the case probably won’t be known for several months. Judge Jackson has appointed a Harvard law professor, Lawrence Lessig, to report back to him on the technical issues involved in the dispute before he makes a final ruling, and he has also asked both sides to provide further evidence. (Microsoft is trying to get Lessig removed, claiming that he has been given too broad a mandate.) As the case proceeds, the Justice Department will be relying on just the sort of intellectual arguments that economists like Brian Arthur have been making. “In these kinds of markets, it is just not right that leaving it to the market is always going to get an efficient outcome,” Daniel Rubinfeld, a former Berkeley professor who is now the chief economist in the Department of Justice’s antitrust division, told me recently. “There is still an honest debate about exactly what role government ought to play, and people are going to differ, but there are very few economists I have talked to who would argue that leaving it to the market is always the best solution. We are just not in that world anymore.” Joel Klein, an intense, sallow fifty-one-year-old Assistant Attorney General who heads the antitrust division, shares that view. Klein is a lawyer (before moving to Justice he was a deputy White House counsel), but he studied economics at Columbia, and he credits Arthur in particular with influencing his thinking on how high-technology markets operate. “In the nineteen-eighties, the view was that markets worked just fine, and the government basically ought to stay out—that the cost of government intervention outweighs its benefits,” he told me. The “new synthesis,” he went on to say, is “that markets don’t always self-correct, and that surgically applied intervention aimed at protecting consumer choice and preventing the abuse of market power is desirable.”

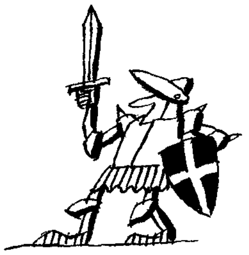
IN the Chicago world, competition doesn’t need guarding by the Justice Department or anybody else. If a firm makes monopoly profits, that fact will attract new entrants into the industry and spur existing competitors to innovate. Before long, the firm’s monopoly will be broken, and full-scale competition will be restored. It is an attractive vision, and one that Gates exploits in his public speeches. “In the world of technology, nobody has a guaranteed position,” he said at Microsoft’s annual shareholder meeting last November. “New ideas like browsers and Java operating system, or software built on artificial-intelligence technology—if that’s done very well and we don’t do something that’s even better, our leading position could be eroded quite rapidly.” If the new economic theories are correct, Gates’s fortune, which is made up of about thirty-seven billion dollars in Microsoft stock, is a great deal more secure than he claims. "There has already been a lot of technical innovation by other people," notes Steven Salop, the Georgetown economist, who has advised the Justice Department on the Microsoft case. "Microsoft wasn't first with the Web browser, but nothing has dislodged it." According to Salop, Microsoft is a "powerful monopoly" that is unlikely to be unseated in the near future, even by "competitors who have better products."

Microsoft's power comes from its ability to exploit what economists call "network externalities." (Arthur uses the phrase "increasing returns," but he is talking about the same thing.) In plain English, "network externalities" means that the value of a product increases along with the number of other people who are already using it. This is not generally true—few people care how many others are buying the same brand of soap or cornflakes—but it usually applies to high-tech goods, for two reasons: they have to be compatible with one another (a Betamax videocassette player is of no use these days, because it can't play VHS cassettes), and they are often linked to a network, in which case the more people there are on the network the more valuable the product becomes. (A telephone is worthless if you're the only person who owns one.)

In a business with network externalities, such as the market for personal-computer operating systems, firms that control the industry standards and boast a large installed base of products have an enormous advantage over their rivals. Most computer buyers know little about the operating system, which is usually pre-installed by computer manufacturers, but they care greatly about the availability of a large number of applications, such as games, word processors, and spreadsheets, to run on top of the operating system. Writing these applications is a time-consuming and costly process, so independent software developers tend to design them only for operating systems that have a large installed base. The result is a "positive feedback" process: successful operating systems tend to have more applications written for them, which further strengthens their market position. This, in turn, encourages more developers to write programs, which attracts more customers, and so on. Eventually, the entire market tips into the hands of one firm, and that company's technology "locks in."

Competitors who arrive on the scene after a market has locked in face a tough task, even if their products are good ones. Digital Research's DR-DOS, which was launched in the late eighties, was in some ways more advanced than the competing version of Microsoft's MS-DOS, but it failed to acquire a significant market share and ultimately all but disappeared. During the early nineties, I.B.M. spent about two billion dollars developing and marketing OS/2, a sophisticated rival to Windows, but it, too, flopped, despite laudatory reviews from independent experts. "There is no presumption in markets with increasing returns that superior technology wins," Garth Saloner said recently. "An inferior technology that gets in first and is supported by network externalities may be able to hold its place even against superior technologies that come later."

Many economists point to the VHS videocassette as an example of an inferior technology that locked in and defeated a superior alternative. (VHS was in some ways technically inferior to Betamax, but VHS was able to offer a larger selection of movies.) Arthur reckons that Microsoft's operating system is another. "People often ask me to give an example of something inferior that locked in," he said. "I say, look at MS-DOS. Here is something totally crummy that locked in for ten years." Arthur's opinion of MS-DOS was shared by many computer scientists, who argued that it was a primitive and unwieldy operating system, but with the development of Windows Microsoft has greatly improved the quality of its products over the years, and few customers are complaining. At the end of 1997, it was estimated that Microsoft had a total installed base of about a hundred and fifty million personal computers.



THE presence of significant network externalities creates powerful incentives for a dominant firm to try to manipulate the market. One way for it to do so is to make products incompatible, or partially incompatible, with offerings from rival venders, in which case customers will tend to stick with products that they know are fully compatible and reliable. Microsoft has been accused of adopting this tactic on numerous occasions. A few years ago, Microsoft told customers that DR-DOS would not work with Windows 3.1, which was then being tested, and those who tried got an error message on their screens. (DR-DOS designers maintained that there was no reason the two programs shouldn't work together.) More recently, Microsoft has made arrangements to sponsor sites that are inaccessible to viewers who are using a Navigator browser from Netscape.

A dominant firm can also sabotage its rivals' products by announcing that it is about to come out with a similar product, even if the actual launch date is months, or even years, away. The mere potential existence of such "vaporware," as it has come to be called, may well persuade buyers to wait for the dominant firm's offering instead of switching to another supplier, thus confirming the dominant firm's position. Garth Saloner and Joseph Farrell published a formal model in the *American Economic Review* several years ago showing how this could happen. "Especially when targetted against a fledgling technology, the pre-announcement may well be anti-competitive," they wrote. Many software companies make strategic use of product pre-announcements, but Microsoft is the company that is most notorious for it. During the eighties, so many of the firm's products failed to materialize on time (the original Windows was the most famous example) that Gates became known in Silicon Valley as the Viscount of Vapor.

Perhaps the most important way a dominant firm can exploit its position, however, is by using its monopoly in one market to bludgeon its way into another. This is particularly significant in light of the network externalities in the computer industry, since new markets are developing there all the time. "I think that high-tech markets are a bit like the land rushes that the United States used to have in the eighteen-eighties in places like Kansas and Oklahoma," Arthur explains. "Everybody lines up behind the starting line, they race their horses and buggies, and if they win they get to stake out their hundred and sixty acres." The problems come, he added, if the victor in one race "parlays his winnings into a Toyota Landcruiser" to use in the next race, or if he "hobbles all the other horses at night." Joel Klein, at the Justice Department, uses a similar figure of speech, comparing the computer industry with a series of sprints, in which the government's role is to make sure that the contestants line up squarely on the starting line. "Our view is that a monopoly fairly acquired is not unlawful," he told me. "Our concern is with the use of monopoly power, once acquired, to protect or extend that monopoly—in this case, the use of monopoly power in operating systems to undermine competition among browsers."

It may seem odd for the Justice Department to be so concerned about the fate of a product that is effectively given away to many consumers by both Microsoft and Netscape, but the government believes that there is a lot more at stake in the battle between Internet Explorer and Navigator than the market for Web browsers. "Microsoft's own documents show that what Bill Gates cared about from Day One was that browsers could go after the operating system," Klein told me. "We have quote after quote from their executives saying, basically, 'We are not worried simply about the browsers, we are worried about control of the desktop, and therefore we have got to win the browser war.' That's the story."

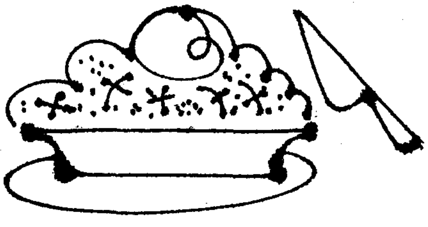
Court documents filed by the government provide support for Klein's argument. In one such document, an internal memo dated May 26, 1995, Gates wrote, "The Internet is the most important single development to come along since the IBM PC was introduced in 1981. It has enough users that it is benefitting from the positive feedback loop of the more users it gets, the more content it gets, and the more content it gets, the more users it gets." Furthermore, Gates continued, the Internet presented a major threat to Microsoft because the firm's rivals, such as Sun Microsystems and Netscape, were trying to exploit and "commoditize the underlying operating system," which is the product that Microsoft's success is based upon.

Since Gates wrote that memo, the potential threat to Microsoft has increased sharply. I.B.M. and many other companies are developing software applications, such as word processors and video games, that use Sun Microsystem's Java programming language to run on Web browsers, without any need for an underlying operating system, such as Windows 95. "Netscape/Java is using the browser to create a 'virtual operating system,'" Paul Maritz, a senior Microsoft executive, warned in another document obtained by the Justice Department. He also wondered whether Windows would become "devalued" or "eventually replaceable."

Beginning in mid-1995, Microsoft's response to this challenge was to start bundling Internet Explorer with Windows 95, so that anybody who bought a computer with a Microsoft operating system also received a Microsoft Web browser, but Judge Jackson has outlawed this tactic, at least temporarily. In stating that Microsoft's right to integrate new products into Windows "stops at least at the point at which it would violate established antitrust law," he drew attention to a series of statutes that many people in Silicon Valley had written off as outdated and ineffectual.

THE antitrust laws, as their name suggests, were introduced in response to the commercial combines that dominated the markets for sugar, lumber, beer, and numerous other goods at the turn of the last century. (The most famous of the "trusts" were the Standard Oil Company, which John D. Rockefeller created in 1879, and the United States Steel Corporation, which J. P. Morgan put together in 1901 after buying out Andrew Carnegie's industrial empire.) The Sherman Act, which Congress passed in 1890, was, at first sight, a historic piece of legislation, for it proscribed any restraint of trade by an existing monopoly and any attempt to form a new monopoly. The Clayton Act, of 1914, which Congress enacted in order to outlaw a number of specific predatory tactics employed by American firms, such as price-discrimination and exclusive-dealing contracts, also seemed at the time to be a potent measure.

In practice, though, the antitrust laws have proved to be a lot more accommodating than their language implies. "The successful competitor, having been urged to compete, must not be turned upon when he wins," Judge Learned Hand wrote fifty years ago, and most courts have taken his advice, refusing to shackle, let alone dismantle, powerful corporations unless they were guilty of blatantly anticompetitive behavior. Faced with potentially hostile judges, the executive branch has traditionally deliberated very carefully before launching a criminal antitrust action. "The Justice Department, as an institution, is extremely conservative," Philip Verveer, a former government lawyer who, during the nineteen-eighties, helped bring the case against A.T. & T., told me. "It has all manner of safeguards."



In 1994, Anne Bingaman, who headed the Justice Department's antitrust division during the first Clinton Administration, reviewed all the evidence against Microsoft and decided that she couldn't prove a broad monopolization case against it under the Sherman Act, which is what many of her staff were recommending. Instead, she settled for negotiating the consent decree that is at the center of the current legal dispute. From the moment Bingaman made that decision, it has faced heavy criticism. In early 1995, Judge Stanley Sporkin, of the United States District Court in Washington, D.C., rejected the settlement between the government and Microsoft, because it didn't address many of the charges against the firm, including its alleged use of vaporware. In a memorable ruling, Sporkin declared, "It is clear to this Court that if it signs the decree presented to it, the message will be that Microsoft is so powerful that neither the market nor the Government is capable of dealing with all of its monopolistic practices."

An appeals court subsequently overturned Sporkin's decision, on the ground that he didn't have the authority to block the settlement, but many critics still believe that the government erred in agreeing to such a limited consent decree. "Gates is like smallpox," Frederick Warren-Boulton, a former chief economist in the Department of Justice's antitrust division, told me. "You have to go in there and you have to nail it. If you leave it lying around, it will just come back." Warren-Boulton, who worked for Novell, a Microsoft rival, in trying to persuade the government to sue Microsoft, compared Bingaman's decision with the Bush Administration's failure to carry on the Gulf War. "They were within two days of the capital, they could have taken Baghdad, but for some reason they decided to sit there and negotiate a consent decree. Boy, was that a mistake!" he said.

Until the Justice Department's recent action, the impact of the consent decree on Microsoft's business was minimal, just as Gates predicted. Even some senior figures at the Justice Department appear to believe that the settlement that Bingaman and her colleagues reached with Microsoft wasn't ideal. "Anytime you have a retrospective dispute, one can think of things one might have changed at the time, but I don't think it would be appropriate of me to second-guess," one official told me. "They did what they thought was right."

Like Bingaman four years ago, Joel Klein is now under pressure to bring a monopolization case against Microsoft under the Sherman Act, this time relating to the company's behavior in the market for Internet browsers. Last month, the Justice Department hired David Boies, a top antitrust litigator, as a consultant, but Klein insisted that he has not yet made a decision on whether to go ahead with the case. "It's too early to tell," he said.

Despite his ongoing tussle with Gates, Klein is keen to avoid being portrayed as a "trust-buster" in the tradition of William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt. "There are some people out there who have a political view that the aggregation of economic power, in and of itself, is a bad thing. I don't think that is the role of the antitrust department," he told me. "Ours is a much more careful, market-driven approach, one that takes into account the potential competitive benefits as well as the potential competitive harms of bigness." Klein stressed that he doesn't want the Justice Department to be seen "as the regulatory bureau for the Microsoft company," and he added that the government's aim is limited and straightforward: "We are trying to have a fair fight for these new markets."

I asked Klein how it felt to be taking on the most popular businessman in the country—a man who has become an icon for the global triumph of capitalism at the end of the twentieth century.

"No need to remind me. I'm well aware that I've forgotten completely about you."

• •

"Microsoft has been a tremendous American success story," he replied. "I say that publicly, and I don't think there is any doubt about it. This is not about good guys and bad guys."

ONE of the ironies of Judge Jackson's preliminary ruling is that the much-maligned consent decree could turn out to have more bite than its critics anticipated. In delaying his ultimate decision for several months, the judge has provided time for a long-overdue discussion about what the government's role should be in an information-based economy. Until now, such a debate had been prevented by the naïve libertarian sentiments of many people in the computer world, and by a more legitimate worry that too much government intrusion could threaten the high-tech sector's remarkable record of innovation.

Predictably, perhaps, economists are divided in their views on how far the government should go. Some of them, including Steven Salop, think the forces leading toward monopolization are so strong in the computer industry that full-scale federal regulation may eventually be unavoidable. Others, including Garth Saloner and Richard Schmalensee, of M.I.T., who has acted as a consultant for Microsoft, believe that vigilant enforcement of the existing antitrust laws is the best solution available. "The notion that you ought to replace faith in the market with faith in the government—I don't think the new theories let you do that," Schmalensee said. "They offer less reason to have unqualified faith in the market, but they don't make the government's job easier."

Even Brian Arthur, whose pioneering work helped spark the revival of antitrust economics, concedes that he is of two minds about the Microsoft battle. "The wrong type of regulation could turn the high-tech sector into something like the high-tech sector in Europe or Japan, not the wild and wonderful free-for-all that it is now," he told me. "I think America has an absolutely wonderful record of innovation in high technology, and I would hate to see that hampered."

Despite these fears, Arthur believes that the Justice Department did the right thing in challenging Microsoft and trying to establish the simple but important principle that companies should have equal access to new markets. "Exactly how you do that in a positive way I don't know," he said. "But it would certainly rule out what is going on now, with Microsoft saying, 'I command a user base of millions, and I'm just going to lever them over into the next market that I am taking over.' It's impossible to start everybody absolutely equal, but when things become egregious the government ought to step in." ♦

THE SPORTING SCENE

BORN SLIPPY

The battle for this winter's Olympic gold medal in women's figure skating is a contest between purity and pyrotechnics.

BY JOHN SEABROOK

A YEAR ago, when Michelle Kwan launched herself into a triple-toe/triple-toe combination jump at the 1997 United States Figure Skating Championships, in Nashville, she was the favorite to win the next Olympic gold medal in ladies' figure skating. The gold is a prize estimated to be worth five to ten million dollars in product endorsements, and the skating world, embarrassed by the scandals of the 1993-94 season, was looking for a champion who would conduct herself with dignity. Kwan, then sixteen and the defending national and world champion, seemed like a gift from heaven. Not only was she exceptionally talented, combining athleticism and artistry like no other skater in history, but she was also an intelligent, attractive, and well-behaved girl from a strong Asian-American family, apparently free of the brattiness of Nancy Kerrigan or the Anna Karenina-meets-the-train theatrics of Oksana Baiul. "Michelle is a *beautiful* skater," skating people would say of Kwan, with the same emphasis on the word "beautiful" that fashion people use to describe a certain model who radiates an ethereal loveliness that is greater than the sum of her parts. With her smooth features, bright eyes, and charmingly girlish smile, Kwan continues a tradition of lovely, levelheaded American girls, going back through Peggy Fleming, the 1968 ladies' champion, to the Radcliffe graduate Tenley Albright, who won the gold medal in 1956.

In Nashville, Kwan performed the first triple-jump combination perfectly, but slipped skating out of the second one, and, in a weird and utterly graceless loss of balance, she ended up in a "Christina's World"-like sprawl on the ice. "That was absolutely unnecessary and uncalled for!" the TV commentator and two-time Olympic champion Dick Button declared, his voice carrying a slightly schoolmarmish note of disapproval. Kwan got up, with ice shavings clinging to her skating dress, only to fall again, later in the program, which allowed Tara Lipinski to take the title away from her and to become, at fourteen, the youngest national champion ever. Afterward, the camera found Michelle gripping her face in shock. A month later, she stumbled in her short program at the World Championships, and Tara claimed that title, too, becoming the youngest world champion ever. Michelle was now the youngest ex-world champion ever.

Why did Michelle fall? Kwan's entourage was reluctant to answer that question. "I can't talk about that," her choreographer, Lori Nichol, told me. "My understanding is that it was a simple technical thing, but you'll have to talk to Frank." Frank Carroll, Kwan's coach, said, "I think Michelle began to feel she had something to lose, and, as much as I wanted to change that notion, it was very difficult, getting into her head. At sixteen, they have their own things going on in their minds." Michelle's older sister Karen, who is also a top competitive skater and is now a sophomore at Boston University, told me, "Last year, Michelle would sometimes break down and cry for no reason. Like, she'd miss one jump and then she'd cry. I think it was just overwhelming to her, what she had to go out and do."

The simplest explanation was that Michelle fell because she had grown up. Since 1993, when she arrived on the international stage at thirteen, a jumping phenom, she had gained thirty pounds and grown five inches. She now had breasts and hips, which is just about the worst thing that can happen to a skater, torquewise. "Once your body starts to develop, it's difficult to keep your jumps, because you start getting hips and become shapely," Dorothy Hamill, who won the gold in 1976, told me re-

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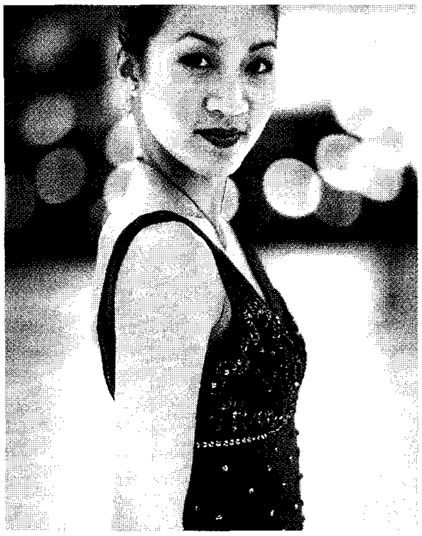
cently. "You can't remain compact." At the same time, all the doubt and uncertainty that are felt by any adolescent girl were visited on Michelle, and they showed in her skating. Fleming told me, "If you're feeling something, it will come out on the ice."

Many athletes fetishize confidence and mental toughness, but this is especially true in skating, where there is a semimystical element to "getting" and "losing" one's triple jumps—the axel, the lutz, the flip, the loop, the salchow, and the toe loop, in descending order of difficulty. Oksana Baiul, who had just turned sixteen when she won the gold medal, told me, "As you get older, you start gaining weight, and you have a lot of things inside of you—especially inside of your head. You start thinking differently, seeing things differently. When you're young, you're just thinking about skating."

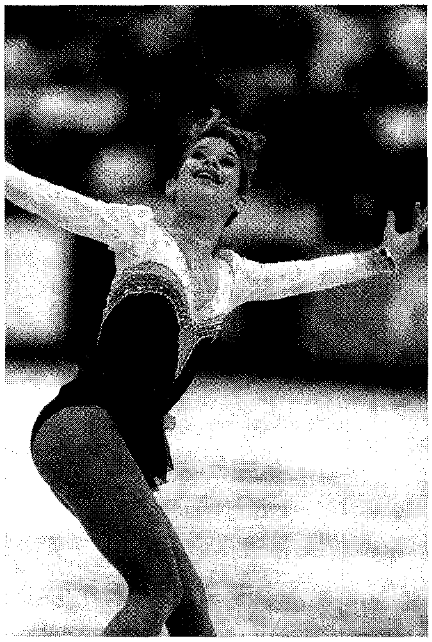
The figure-skating world doesn't know quite what to think about the ever-younger girls who now dominate the sport. Skating is an inbred, hybrid culture that includes elements from the worlds of dance, sports, and theatre, and combines a new media focus on individuals and personalities with the old media world of ice spectaculars. No one wants the freakish gymnastics element to creep into the sport. Yet the TV audiences love to see triple jumps, and girlish bodies are better than womanly ones at doing triples. So at the same time that the sport has become more athletic it has become more theatrical: judges insist that the athletes have the "presentation" of mature women, and the girls comply by wearing lots of makeup and playing adult roles. But role-playing alone can't convey the grownup self-awareness that informs the best skating. For a teen-age girl, finding the balance between childhood fearlessness and adult vulnerability can be tougher than landing a triple axel.

KWAN began the current season skating well, but she reinjured a stress fracture in one toe in November and cancelled the rest of her competitions. Her only head-to-head competition with Lipinski prior to the 1998 National Championships, taking place this week in Philadelphia, was at Skate America, which was held in October, in Detroit. On that occasion, I spent a wintry weekend shuttling between the Westin Hotel Renaissance Center, where the skaters were staying, and the Joe Louis Arena, where the competition was held.

On Friday, the Renaissance Center was filled with coaches, judges, agents, athletes, and United States Figure Skating Association officials. Surrounding the lobby was a labyrinth of hallways designed to take pedestrians past as many shops as possible, and the skating people were meandering through in an attempt to find the exit where the shuttle buses were to leave for the Joe Louis Arena. "Keep going past the Burger King, and when you see Winkelman's go right," one Skate America volunteer advised.



Queens of the double axel and triple lutz: Michelle Kwan (above) and Tara Lipinski.



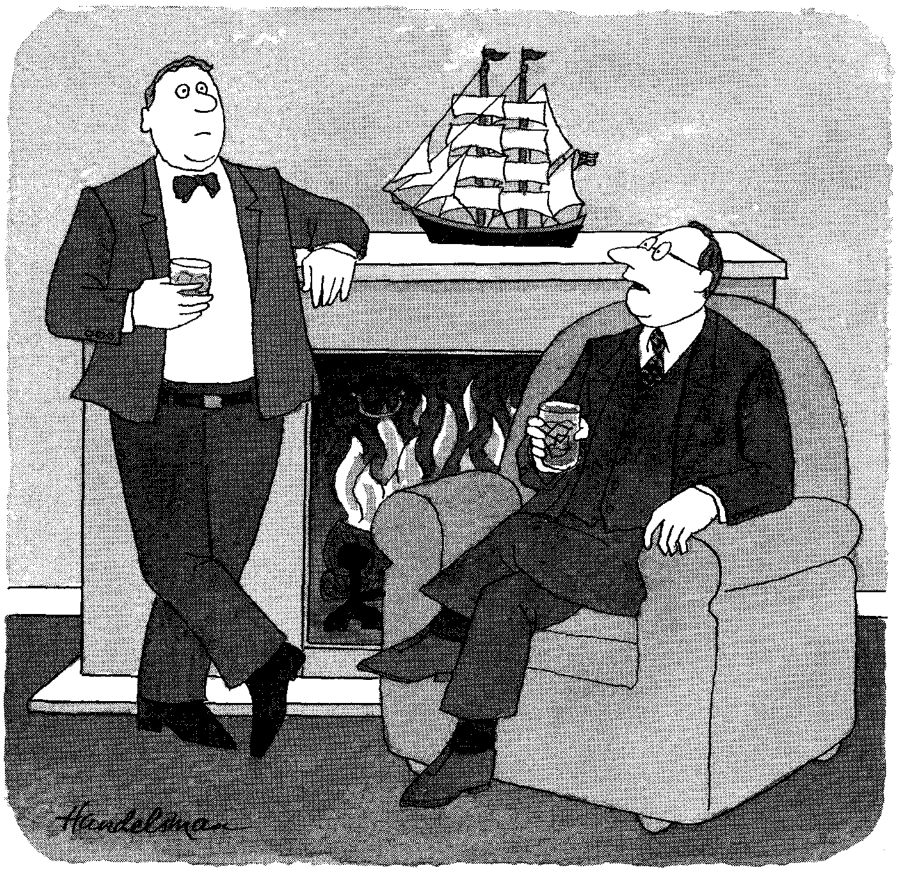
BOTTOM: MICHELLE HARVATH

The skaters paraded through the lobby in DKNY warmup tops and skintight leggings that delineated the amazing "glutes"—gluteus muscles—in their backsides. The tremendous strength in their adductors—the muscles on the inside of your thighs that ache after your annual trip to the rink—made them walk both bowlegged and stiff-kneed, as though they already had their skates on. Michelle was escorted by her mother, Estella, who was trundling a metal case that held Michelle's skates, and by her agent, Shep Goldberg, who also represents the gymnast Mary Lou Retton. Tara was accompanied by her agent, Mike Burg. Earlier, Tara had been seen tearing around the Renaissance Center with her friends (whom you can read about on Tara's Web site, www.taralipinski.com). She lives in nearby Bloomfield Hills and trains at the Detroit Skating Club, with Richard Callaghan, a well-known coach. Legions of eight-year-old girls were pursuing both skaters everywhere. Too young to have learned "Thrilled to meet you!" or other adult forms of flattery, the little girls just studied Tara and Michelle with hard dolls' eyes while waiting for their heroines to sign their autograph books. Michelle dotted the "i" in her name with a little heart.

Michelle and Tara seem prepared for ice-princesshood in ways that Nancy Kerrigan and Oksana Baiul did not. Both are named after mass-culture commodities—Michelle for the Beatles song, Tara for the plantation in "Gone with the Wind"—and both learned to skate in malls before they were seven. Both sets of parents got their daughters into élite training centers when they were very young, and made great sacrifices to raise the sixty thousand dollars that a top skater can chew up in annual expenses. The Lipinskis mortgaged their home; the Kwans sold theirs. And both families had the girls home-schooled with private tutors. Tara trained at the University of Delaware's Ice Skating Science Development Center. Michelle spent her formative years living with her mother in what is known as "the Debi Thomas tepee"—a cabin next to the Ice Castle International Training Center in Lake Arrowhead, situated high in the San Bernardino Mountains. (She and her parents now live in a bigger house nearby.)

Although Michelle is originally from Torrance, California, and Tara was born in Philadelphia, both actually grew up in Skatingland, a never-never land halfway between Mt. Olympus and Las Vegas, and not far from Disney. Skatingland is a world of faux Bavarian chalets and snow-frosted peaks that have perfectly frozen skating ponds nestled among them. Kris Kringle is in residence there, and Belgian waffles are served three times a day. It occupies the same space in the cultural mind as "The Sound of Music," Sonja Henie, and Sun Valley. It's the place that the mail-order catalogues like Coldwater Creek and Bridgehead come from. It smells strongly of scented candles and has an odd baroque sentimentality about it—the sentimentality of the movie "Ice Castles," in which a young girl from the Iowa hinterland (the actress Lynn-Holly Johnson) overcomes her lack of formal training and her gruff but sweet-hearted Dad (the young Tom Skerritt) to triumph over the snooty rich skaters at the championships, but then is blinded in a freak skating accident and becomes a basket case who never leaves the house until, with the loving support of her boyfriend (Robby Benson), she returns to the ice and, still blind, skates triumphantly at the Midwest Regionals to the schmalzy Marvin Hamlisch tune "Looking Through the Eyes of Love," sung by Melissa Manchester.

But, while seventy years of kitsch and nostalgia cling to figure skating, modern skaters also live in the Jerry Maguire world of big-time sports marketing. Both Tara and Michelle have the weird savvy that develops when you get an agent at thirteen, write your autobiography a couple of years later (each girl has recently published her memoirs), earn hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in the sixty-odd-city Campbell's Soups Champions on Ice Tour (despite the girls' so-called amateur status), and play Truth or Dare on the tour bus with the more sexually experienced skaters. They're like sixteen-year-olds going on thirty-eight. At the same time, both girls are under enormous pressure not to grow up, since growing up makes it harder to do the triple jumps, and, as a result, they have preserved oddly undeveloped, childlike parts of themselves. Both collect Beanie Babies, and Michelle still has her childhood stuffed animals. In interviews this year, Michelle has been saying, "I want to get the joy back into my skating," as though at seventeen she were already too old, things were already too messy, and she needed to return to a more carefree period of her life. Part of the job of a skating champion these days is to enact in symbolic form a larger cultural transaction: we make available to certain children the wealth and authority formerly enjoyed only by adults, and in return we ask that they not become actual adults. Their end of the bargain is to preserve our fantasy of gifted childhood forever.



"Global warming, in my opinion, is the last refuge of an environmentalist."

WHEN I caught up with Tara, she was flopped on a couch under the Westin Hotel escalators, her long blond hair spread out over its cushion, her jewelled fingers—two rings on the right hand, three on the left—resting on the back of its seat. Tara has a wide, shapely mouth, which is usually slightly open. At four feet ten and a half and eighty-two pounds, her body looks like a Vanna White doll. (Richard Callaghan, her coach, looks unnervingly like Pat Sajak.) "I put my arms around her and I go, 'Oh, gosh, it feels like my little boy,'" Peggy Fleming told me. "Those little, teeny shoulders and that little, teeny frame!" Kwan's coach, Frank Carroll, explained, "As a skater, your strength-size ratio is at its highest when you're a thirteen-year-old girl. With boys, that's not true. Their backs aren't strong enough yet at that age." He also told me, "Tara rotates like a bat out of hell."

Tara's advisers refer to her as the Boss. Her confidence is terrifying. "A lot of skaters love to skate, but when they're out there competing they're like 'Just get me out of this!'" she told me now, sucking on a squirt bottle that was half full of a pink sports drink. "But I love to compete. Even as much as you hate the nervousness when you're out there, when you look back it's the best part of it—competing."

Her agent has got Tara endorsement deals with Minute Maid orange juice and Campbell's soups, and has signed her up with DKNY to flog a line of kids' clothing and with Mattel to promote a new line of Barbie dolls on ice skates, which will be marketed around the time of the Olympics. Tara likes to warm up to "Barbie Girl," by the Danish group Aqua: "I'm a Barbie Girl / In a Barbie World / Life in plastic / It's fantastic!"

I asked Tara whether she had any fear of winning. She looked at me like this was a funny joke. "Nope. I don't think about it," she said.

"Do you ever doubt yourself?"

"Oh, I think every skater has doubts. You'll go out there, and doubt will come in, and that's when you have to fight against it, and not hold back. Sometimes when I do my triple lutz in my short program, it's like 'Oh, my gosh, it's coming.' That's when you just have to let go and do it, and I think that's the hardest part of competing—keeping yourself strong like that. You just have to let the doubt come in and let it roll back out and do your thing. It's hard. And sometimes if you're tired, and your legs aren't perfect that day, that's when the doubt will get you."

SOME skaters say that the top international skating events are often decided at the practice sessions on the afternoon of the day they take place. The skaters do their routines with no pressure on them, and it's easy to tell who's got the jumps and who hasn't. Watching the girls practice gives the judges a good idea of who should win, and that will figure in the marks they give that night. Also, at practice the judges can mingle and meet the girls. In some ways, the campaign for the women's gold medal remains a charm contest. The competition itself is only the last of a long series of opportunities the skaters have had to show themselves as happy, beautiful, and ladylike for the judges.

At practice on Friday afternoon in the arena, the judges were sitting at their tables, chatting with some of the skaters who were seated behind them. The judges were, for the most part, older people with deep roots in the pre-athletic skating era; some had been volunteering for forty years. They are the ministers of Skatingland, whose authority as interpreters of beautiful skating is under siege from vulgar athleticism. Most amateur competitions are now largely a matter of counting the number of a skater's jumps and rotations rather than of assessing the skater's grace. Professional competitions are becoming the last refuge of "artistic merit." The skating establishment has also been slow to adopt the new boot-making technologies that have revolutionized roller-skating. Dorothy Hamill told me, "The boots are all hand-lasted and custom-made, and the blades are steel, so they weigh a lot. If Brian Boitano were wearing a lightweight plastic boot and a titanium blade, he'd be able to do five rotations in the air tomorrow."

Dick Button was holding court down below the platform where he would be seated with Peggy Fleming that night. The skating people in the stands talked about the height on the fourteen-year-old Russian Yevgeny Plushenko's triple axel: "And he does a Bielmann spin, the only man who does one!" And where was Nicole Bobek, the vixen, the current scarlet woman of U.S. skating, who has had to shoulder all the adult sexuality that Michelle and Tara have shrugged off? ("Nicole will eat you alive," I was told when I inquired about interviewing her.) Reporters from both the respectable and the tabloid media were combing the rows, searching for narratives to replace the Tonya Harding–Nancy Kerrigan mother lode of four years ago. The clean, cutting sound of blades on ice pleasantly filled the huge, empty arena, in which the Red Wings won the Stanley Cup last June.

Tara's physique was the hot topic of the practice. Her rivals, looking hopefully for some sign of development in the bust or hips, were disappointed, but she was definitely longer in the body than she had been last winter—two inches, by some estimates, though Mike Burg, her agent, said she had grown only an inch. I sat with Burg for a while, about twenty rows behind the judges. Nearby, Tara was stretching her glutes. Photographers honeybeed around her. The camera loves Tara for some of the same reasons that the camera loved Jon-Benet Ramsey. That particular combination of woman and child is something you don't see every day.

Tara and Michelle began working through their routines, gliding around three other skaters who were on the ice. It was amazing how none of them crashed into one another, but then near-misses are a good way of psyching out an opponent. Whether or not Surya Bonaly, from France, had intended to rattle the Japanese skater Midori Ito by doing a back flip near her in the 1992 Winter Olympics is

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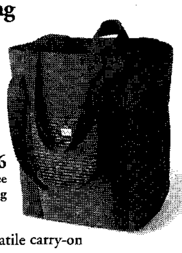

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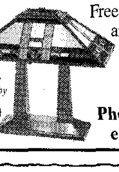

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as with great red rivers risen to flood.
I too was flooded. My eyes brimmed
the green world blurry, though my face stayed flat.

The rhythm of walking took all my thought.
Later the shovels of dirt fell splat
on that cover, and they left a nice mound

like the start of a rose garden.
When I stretched on my narrow bed that night
I almost felt the strong hands heave me up;

my body swung through the dark like a child's.

—Mary Karr

the stuff of which skating lore is made.

Most of the people I saw at the practice thought Kwan was the better skater. "I think Michelle is much more of an artist than Tara is ready to be," Peggy Fleming said, "so, if it turns out that both are skating really, really well, Michelle has it, hands down." Dick Button told me, "Tara doesn't yet know how to command you to understand what she's doing." To me it seemed that the difference between Michelle and Tara was not the jumps but the awareness of what a jump means. With Michelle, there is a moment of thought before the jump and then a delicious afterthought—a look back at the jump—when it's over, whereas Tara flings herself into her jumps without those little bits of embroidery that connect the airborne to the earthbound. Her jumps lack the awareness of what they overcome.

But if the knowledge that one could fall was what made Michelle a more artistic skater than Tara it also increased the chances that Michelle would fall. The consensus among the skating press was that Tara had the psychological advantage. Michelle knew she had to make no mistakes, because Tara certainly wouldn't make any, and the pressure this knowledge placed on Michelle would cause a slip—some sixteenth of an inch off on her triple-loop combination—and a slip was all it would take for Tara to win.

The short program, which was skated on Friday night, is the only thing that remains of the old world of school figures, of which there were sixty-nine in all—eights, threes, double threes, loops, brackets, done on all edges, skating forward and skating backward. Skaters called them "doing patch," because each skater made the figures on his or her own patch of clean ice. (The reason there were so many 4 A.M. days in a skater's life was that the skater had to get the cleanest ice.) School used to be all there was to figure skating until Sonja Henie brought dance to the sport, in the thirties. The remaining required elements in the short program are spins, footwork, and jumps, including a double axel and one triple-jump combination. Both the short and the long programs get two marks—a "technical" mark and a mark for "presentation," or artistic impression.

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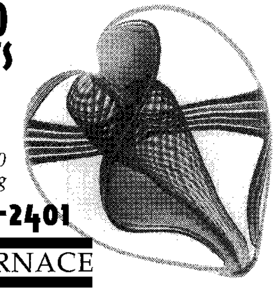

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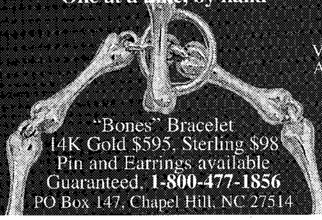

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The girls came out in their new skating outfits—each girl has one for the short program, one for the long—which they will wear throughout the season. Michelle's was a backless burnt-orange-and-cream number with flutters around the skirt; Tara's was sequinned around the shoulders, and was done in a style that Jere Longman, of the *Times*, described as conveying the message "I'm going to my First Communion and I intend to yodel." Both Michelle and Tara were heavily made up, and their hair was in elegantly coiffed buns on the top of their heads.

Michelle looked awful in the warmup. She fell on her triple-lutz/double-toe, and then, incredibly, she missed a routine double axel. Frank Carroll, her coach, was standing in the skaters' box, called the Kiss and Cry, on the edge of the rink. Wearing a dark-blue pinstriped suit, with a camel overcoat draped over one arm, he watched as his best hope for an Olympic gold in a long and distinguished career—it had reached silver with Linda Fratianne, in 1980—started falling apart. After missing the axel, Michelle just stood there, her hands on her hips, looking down. Then she left the ice.

"She's cracking," one of the reporters said.

But both girls skated error-free short programs. Artistically, Michelle looked better. Technically, Tara's program was more difficult than Michelle's: it had a triple flip in it, whereas Michelle's had only the triple lutz. Even so, eight of the nine judges marked Michelle ahead of Tara on technical merit. At the press conference afterward, Tara seemed a little annoyed. "My jumps actually felt stronger than they did at Worlds," she said, "but I guess the judges didn't think so." Mike Burg later elaborated on Tara's remarks, explaining that in his view the judges, who were very old-fashioned, were simply biased against Tara. Having tolerated athleticism for the sake of TV ratings, and unleashed these young triple-jumping demons, he said the judges were now trying to put a lid on it by marking the better athletes down. In other words, the judges were voting for Skatingland.

THE ladies' "free skate," or long program, is by far the most popular activity in women's sports—the only sports event in which the women's version is more popular than the men's. (In 1994, the ladies' long program at Lillehammer ranked fourth on TV's all-time most-watched list.) These four minutes are as pure a dose of live performance as the media offer. For the athletes, they are also among the most pitiless and harrowing four minutes in sports. Although the long program is an endurance event—within a minute and a half the exercise becomes anaerobic—the skater has to continue to look as if she were enjoying herself. The smile at the end of the routine is of the utmost importance: skaters practice many hours in front of the mirror to get it right. Sweat, which is celebrated by the new magazines for women's sports, is still not acceptable in figure skating. (Among

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the lingering images of the tawdry Tonya affair are the chalky white clumps of deodorant you saw whenever she lifted her arms.) "If you show you're sweating, you're not in shape," Peggy Fleming told me. "You're showing that you're weak." She added, "The process is designed to find any sign of weakness and apply pressure until it breaks."

In the morning on the day of the ladies' long program, I ran into Frank Carroll in the Renaissance Burger King. We talked about Michelle's short. Carroll observed that it was a relief that the program seemed to have been well received by the judges. "I just wish Michelle had a little more confidence," he said before biting into his Croissan'wich. "She is the best, after all."

That night, at the Joe Louis Arena, the crowd was dressier. Even the Zamboni driver had made an effort to spruce himself up. Peggy Fleming was wearing a startlingly low-cut black dress, her cleavage partly obscured by a chiffon modesty panel, which is very skating. Dick was in his usual blue blazer and conservative slacks. The flower girls—little girls who skate onto the ice and collect flowers and stuffed animals that fans have thrown to their idols—wore tartan skirts, white kneesocks, and blouses with Polish folk sleeves.

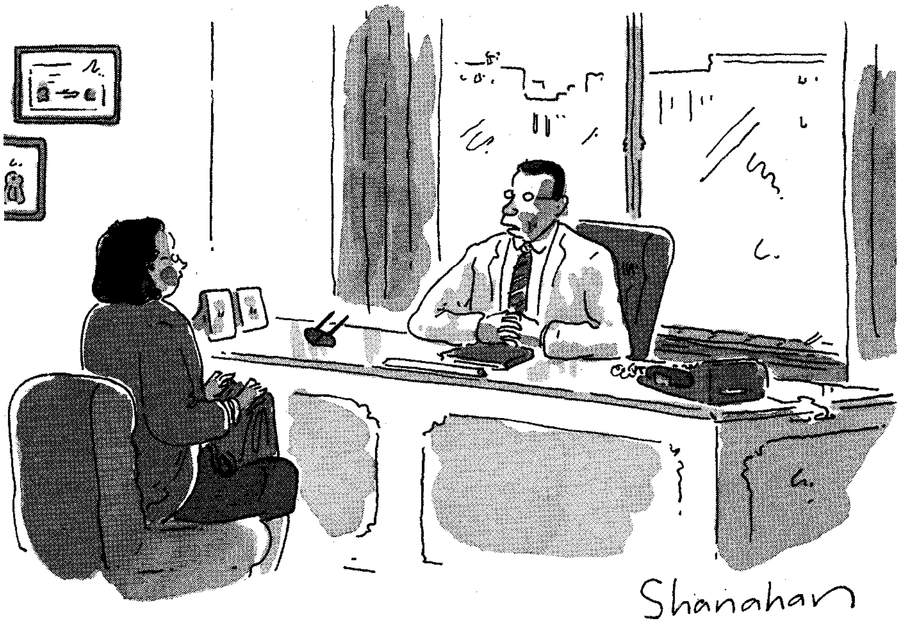
As the awful, blinding pressure began to build, partisans of both the Tara and the Michelle camps could be found prowling the great old halls outside the Joe Louis Arena. "At least, it's not me out there," Lori Nichol, Michelle's choreographer, said. The concessions weren't doing much business: people seemed too nervous to eat. Only the eight-year-old-girl fans, practicing axels on the way to the ladies' room, seemed unfazed by the pressure.

Michelle's father, Danny, went by, and disappeared into the recesses of the hall. When Michelle skates, he settles somewhere in the rafters to watch. He doesn't want the camera to find him. Like Venus Williams's dad and Tiger Woods's dad, Danny is Michelle's sports superego. He retired early from his job at Pacific Bell, and this summer he sold a family-owned Chinese restaurant in Torrance, the Golden Pheasant. He now lives in Lake Arrowhead with Michelle, and keeps a close eye on her, giving her few chances to slip up.

"Have you ever made a huge mistake?" I once asked Michelle when we were having lunch with her mom and dad in Lake Arrowhead. "Done something really foolish?"

"I don't know," Michelle said, thinking. "I'm not really good at lying, so . . ." She looked across the table at her father and said, laughing, "Why do you have that smirk on your face?"

Danny said, "I'm thinking. I can't think of anything."



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"How about boys?" I asked Michelle. "You have a boyfriend?"

Danny made a face, then smiled.

"Dad always laughs," Michelle said. "No, I don't. It's Lake Arrowhead."

"No suitable boys?"

Michelle giggled. "Not in skating."

Estella said, "She's still very young."

"Asian parents . . ." Michelle grumbled.

"I don't think it's Asian," Danny said, and leaned forward. "Let me try to go back to—"

"Lecture No. 1,859," Michelle put in.

"I never say you can't have a boyfriend. I don't. As I try to explain to her, you put three things together in life. What's No. 1 in priority for you? Your No. 1 priority is skating. And then you also have school. Then comes the fun part—like dating, or something else. So you put the three things together— She always complains I analyze too much, but I say put these three things together, you make the decision. Dating, can it wait? Yes, it can wait. Can education wait? Yes and no. Can skating wait? No, it can't wait. You have to do it now."

Michelle sighed. "I always look at my parents like they're so wise. But if they're so wise, how come they're not millionaires?"

"Because I'm a loser," Danny said. "I lose too much."

MICHELLE came out of the tunnel and stood by the rink, waiting to skate. She tugged on her dress, practiced some moves with her arms, and made little shaking movements with her legs, trying to stay loose. When it was time for her to take the ice, she relaxed her shoulders and stepped with her left skate first, an old habit. She assumed her pose in the center of the ice, looking down, and took a deep breath. The music began—"Lyra Angelica," by William Alwyn. First came the triple-lutz/double-toe-loop, right into the triple-toe-loop/double-toe-loop, which landed perfectly, right in front of the Thrifty Car Rental sign. Then the triple flip, then a double axel. Three triples down. The music changed, and Michelle took a charming little giddyap stride of happiness. Away, doubt and confusion. Hello, Mickey, President Clinton, David Letterman. A triple loop, then a triple salchow, and then the final jump, the triple lutz—perfect. Hello, America! She glided into her spiral sequence—the loveliest part of her program, in which she spreads her arms, leans out, and joyously offers up this beautiful thing she has just done for the audience to savor. She finished with a triple toe loop and a butterfly jump. And then the smile, which is the deal clincher. Michelle has the best smile in the business. It has a limpid quality, like the Little Mermaid's smile.

The crowd stood and applauded for several minutes. Cellophane-wrapped bouquets rained down on the ice; the flower girls delivered them to Michelle in Kiss and Cry. The marks were very good: all 5.8s for technical merit, and all 5.9s for presentation. A cameraman found Danny, and the Jumbotron over the scoreboard showed him slapping someone a high five.

"Representing the United States, Tara Lipinski . . ."

As Tara skated to the center of the ice, eight-year-old girls' voices calling out "Go, Tara!" echoed in the otherwise silent arena. Tara's music began, the soundtrack for the movie "The Rainbow." She smoothly landed a double axel, then did a perfect triple flip. Now came her triple lutz. She kicked her right leg high, jumped, and—bang!—she hit the ice hard. A quick, shocked intake of crowd breath. Tara fell! Tara hadn't fallen since Germany in 1996. But there she was, sitting on her glutes, another fallen princess. She got up off the ice and skated the rest of the program cleanly, finishing second to Michelle.

Afterward, both girls faced the skating press, sitting side by side on a raised dais. Michelle spoke first. "I can say that I came out of my coma," she said. "I feel different this year. The joy is back." She smiled her thrilled-little-girl smile.

Tara sat there with her lips parted, a slightly haughty look on her face. When Michelle finished, she spoke curtly. "The mistake I made was not a big deal," she said, crossing her arms. "It was just a mistake." She paused, and looked over the heads of the press, perhaps catching a glimpse of her rapidly vanishing childhood, with its unselfconscious, ballerina-on-a-music-box rotations. You could hear in her voice a slight false note of confidence as she said, "I think I am still in a good spot." ♦

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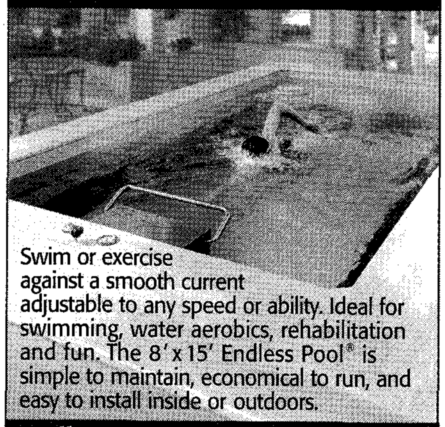

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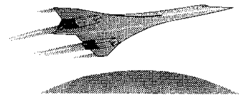

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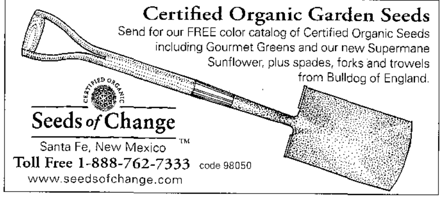

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PERSONAL HISTORY

ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY

Depression afflicts millions of Americans each year, and many don't know where to turn when it strikes. The author recalls the greatest struggle of his life.

BY ANDREW SOLOMON

I DID not experience depression until I had pretty much solved my problems. I had come to terms with my mother's death three years earlier, was publishing my first novel, was getting along with my family, had emerged intact from a powerful two-year relationship, had bought a beautiful new house, was writing well. It was when life was finally in order that depression came slinking in and spoiled everything. I'd felt acutely that there was no excuse for it under the circumstances, despite perennial existential crises, the forgotten sorrows of a distant childhood, slight wrongs done to people now dead, the truth that I am not Tolstoy, the absence in this world of perfect love, and those impulses of greed and uncharitableness which lie too close to the heart—that sort of thing. But now, as I ran through this inventory, I believed that my depression was not only a rational state but also an incurable one. I kept redating the beginning of the depression: since my breakup with my girlfriend, the past October; since my mother's death; since the beginning of her two-year illness; since puberty; since birth. Soon I couldn't remember what pleasurable moods had been like.

I was not surprised later when I came across research showing that the particular kind of depression I had undergone has a higher morbidity rate than heart disease or any cancer. According to a recent study by researchers at Harvard and the World Health Organization, only respiratory infections, diarrhea, and newborn infections cost more years of useful life than major depression. It is projected that by the year 2020 depression could claim more years than war and AIDS put together. And its incidence is rising fast. Between six and ten per cent of all Americans now living are battling some form of this illness; one study indicates that nearly fifty per cent have experienced at least one psychiatric disorder in their lifetime. Treatments are proliferating, but only twenty-eight per cent of all people who have a major depression seek help from a specialist; fifteen per cent of hospitalized patients succeed in killing themselves. Attempting to understand this strange malady, I plunged into intensive research shortly after my recovery. I started by attempting a coherent narrative of my own experience.

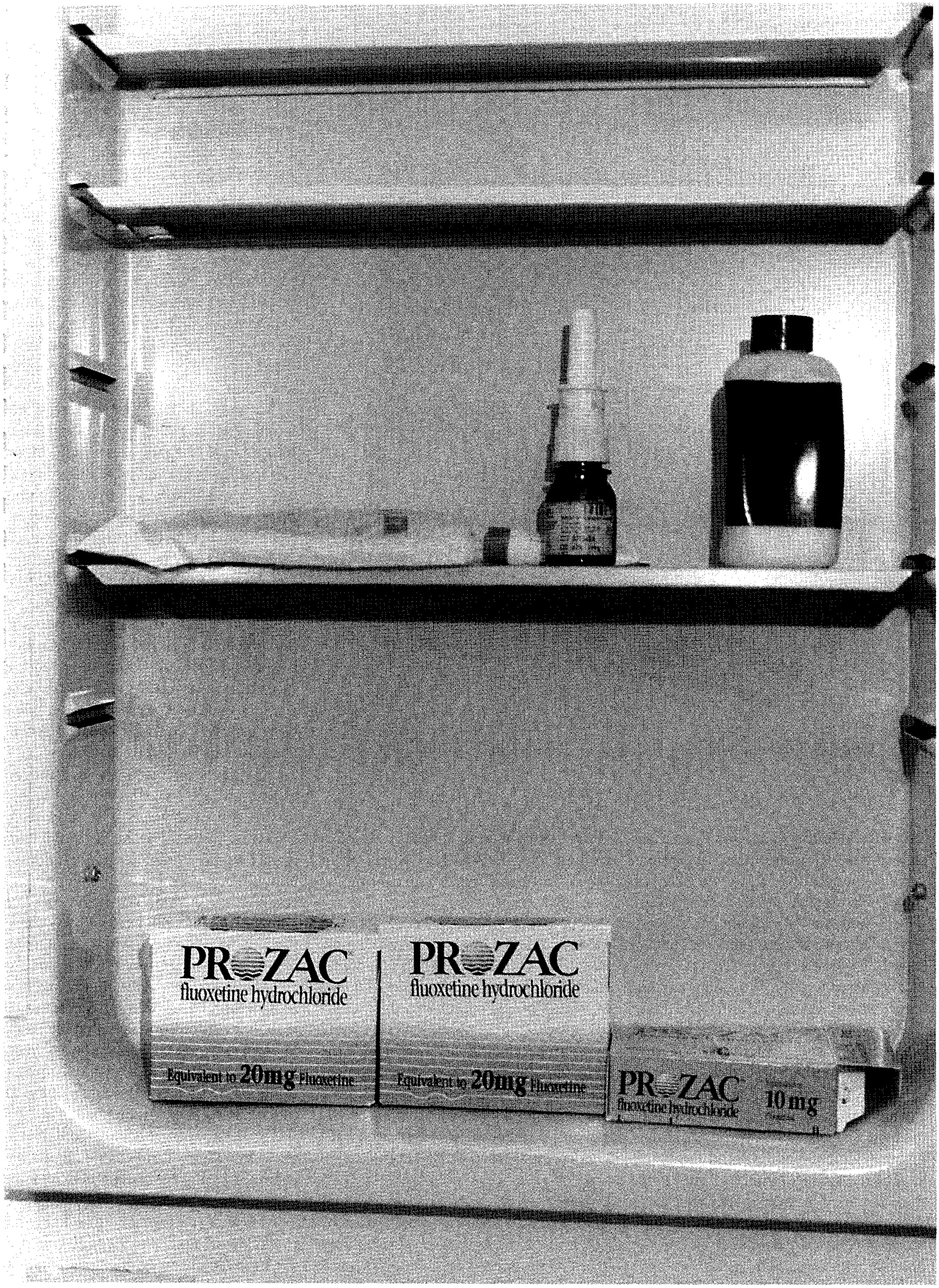
In June, 1994, I began to be constantly bored. My first novel had recently been published in England, and yet its favorable reception did little for me. I read the reviews indifferently and felt tired all the time. In July, back home in downtown New York, I found myself burdened by phone calls, social events, conversation. The subway proved intolerable. In August, I started to feel numb. I didn't care about work, family, or friends. My writing slowed, then stopped. My usually headstrong libido evaporated.

All this made me feel that I was losing my self. Scared, I tried to schedule pleasures. I went to parties and failed to have fun, saw friends and failed to connect; I bought things I had previously wanted and gained no satisfaction from them. I was overwhelmed by messages on my answering machine and ceased to return calls. When I drove at night, I constantly thought I was going to swerve into another car. Suddenly feeling I'd forgotten how to use the steering wheel, I would pull over in a sweat.

In September, I had agonizing kidney stones. After a brief hospitalization, I spent a vagabond week migrating from friend to friend. I would stay in the house all day, avoiding the street, and was careful never to go far from the phone. When they came home, I would cry. Sleeping pills got me through the night, but morning began to seem increasingly difficult. From then on, the slippage was steady. I worked even less well, cancelled more plans. I began eating irregularly, seldom feeling hungry. A psychoanalyst I was seeing told me, as I sank lower, that avoiding medication was very courageous.

At about this time, night terrors began. My book was coming out in the United States, and a friend threw a party on October 11th. I was feeling too lacklustre to invite many people, was too tired to stand up much during the party, and sweated horribly all night. The event lives in my mind in ghostly outlines and washed-out colors. When I got home, terror seized me. I lay in bed, not sleeping and hugging my pillow for comfort. Two weeks later—the day before my thirty-first birthday—I left the house once, to buy groceries; petrified for no reason, I suddenly lost bowel control and soiled myself. I ran home, shaking, and went to bed, but I did not sleep, and could not get up the following day. I wanted to call people to cancel birthday plans, but I couldn't. I lay very still and thought about speaking, trying to figure out how. I moved my tongue, but there were no sounds. I had forgotten how to talk. Then I began to cry without tears. I was on my back. I wanted to turn over, but couldn't remember how to do that, either. I guessed that perhaps I'd had a stroke. At about three that afternoon, I managed to get up and go to the bathroom. I returned to bed shivering. Fortunately, my father, who lived uptown, called about then. "Cancel tonight," I said, struggling with the strange words. "What's wrong?" he kept asking, but I didn't know.

If you trip or slip, there is a moment, before your hand shoots out to break your fall, when you feel the earth rushing up at you and you cannot help yourself—a passing, fraction-of-a-second horror. I felt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The author learned to address the practicalities: "Losing your mind, like losing your keys, is a hassle." Photograph by Nick Waplington.

"I don't feel the pea anymore, but that condom wrapper is killing me."

• •

that way hour after hour. Freud once described pleasure as the release of tension; I felt as though I had a physical need, of impossible urgency and discomfort, from which there was no release—as though I were constantly vomiting but had no mouth. My vision began to close. It was like trying to watch TV through terrible static, where you can't distinguish faces, where nothing has edges. The air, too, seemed thick and resistant, as though it were full of mushed-up bread.

My father came to my apartment with my brother, his fiancée, and a friend; fortunately, they had keys. I had had nothing to eat in almost two days, and they tried to give me smoked salmon. I ate a bite, then threw up all over myself. The next day, my father took me to my analyst's office. "I need medication," I said, diving deep for the words. "I'm sorry," she said, and she called a psychopharmacologist.

Dr. Alfred Wiener agreed to see me in an hour. He seems to have come out of some "Spellbound"-era shrink movie: he is in his late sixties, smokes cigars, has a European accent, and wears carpet slippers. He has elegant manners and a kindly smile. He asked me a string of specific questions. "Very classic indeed," he said calmly as I trotted out my atrocities. "Don't worry, we'll soon have you well." He wrote a prescription for Xanax, then handed me some Zoloft. "You'll come back tomorrow," he said. "The Zoloft will take some time. The Xanax will alleviate anxiety almost immediately. Don't worry, you have a very normal group of symptoms."

ONCE upon a time, depression was generally seen as a purely psychological disturbance; these days, people are likely to think of it as a tidy biological syndrome. In fact, it's hard to make sense of the distinction. Most depressive disorders are now thought to involve a mixture of reactive (so-called neurotic) factors and internal ("endogenous") factors; depression is seldom a simple genetic disease or a simple response to external troubles. Resolving the biological and the psychological understanding of depression is as difficult as reconciling predestination and free will. If you remember the beginning of this paragraph well enough to make sense of the end of it, that is a chemical process; love, faith, and despair all have chemical manifestations, and chemistry can make you feel things. Treatments have to accommodate this binary structure—the interplay between vulnerability and external events.

Vulnerability need not be genetic. Ellen Frank, of the University of Pittsburgh, says, "Experiences in childhood can scar the brain and leave one vulnerable to depression." As with asthma, predisposition and environment conspire. Syndrome and symptom cause each other: loneliness is depressing, but depression also causes loneliness. "When patients recover from depression by means of psychotherapy," Frank says, "we see the same changes in, for example, sleep EEG as when they receive medication. A socially generated depression does not necessarily need psychosocial treatment, nor a biologically generated one a biological treatment."

The day after my birthday, I moved to my father's. I was hardly able to get up for the next week. The days were like this: I would wake up panicked. Xanax would relieve the panic if I took enough, but then I would collapse into thick, confusing, dream-heavy sleep. I wanted only to take enough to sleep forever. Whenever I woke up, I took more pills. Killing myself, like taking a shower, was too elaborate an agenda to entertain. All I wanted was for it to stop, but I could not say what "it" was. Words, with which I have always been intimate, seemed suddenly like complex metaphors, the use of which entailed much more energy than I had.

Little has been written about the fact that depression is ridiculous. I can remember lying frozen in bed, crying because I was too frightened to take a shower and at the same time knowing that showers are not scary. I ran through the individual steps in my mind: You sit up, turn and put your feet on the floor, stand, walk to the bathroom, open the bathroom door, go to the edge of the tub... I divided it into fourteen steps as onerous as the Stations of the Cross. I knew that for years I had taken a shower every day. Hoping that someone else could open the bathroom door, I would, with all the force in my body, sit up; turn and put my feet on the floor; and then feel so incapacitated and frightened that I would roll over and lie face down. I would cry again, weeping because the fact that I could not do it seemed so idiotic to me. At other times, I have enjoyed skydiving: it is easier to climb along a strut toward the tip of a plane's wing against an eighty-mile-an-hour wind at five thousand feet than it was to get out of bed those days.

Evenings, I was able to rise. Most depression has a diurnal rhythm, improving over the course of the day and descending overnight. I could sit up for dinner with my father. I could speak by then. I tried to explain; my father implacably assured me that it would pass, and told me to eat. When I was defeated by the difficulty of getting a piece of lamb chop onto my fork, he would do it for me. He would say he remembered feeding me when I was a child, and would make me promise, jesting, to cut up his lamb chops when he was old and toothless. "I used to work twelve hours, go to four parties in an evening," I would say. He would assure me that I would be able to do it all again soon. He could just as well have told me that I would soon be able to build a helicopter of cookie dough and fly to Neptune, so clear was it to me that my real life was definitively over. After dinner, I would return some calls. It is embarrassing to admit depression; to all but my closest friends I said that I'd developed an "obscure tropical virus."

When you are depressed, the past and the future are absorbed entirely by the present, as in the world of a three-year-old. You can neither remember feeling better nor imagine that you will feel better. Being upset, even profoundly upset, is a temporal experience, whereas depression is atemporal. Depression means that you have no point of view.

SINCE that first visit to Dr. Wiener, I have been playing the medicine game. I have been on, in various combinations and doses, Zoloft, Xanax, Paxil, Navane, Valium, BuSpar, and Wellbutrin. This is a relatively short list. I do well with SSRIs ("selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors," the growing family of drugs that includes Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, and Luvox) and have good experiences with benzodiazepines (such as Xanax and Valium). I have never been on a tricyclic (which chiefly affects the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine) or on an MAO inhibitor (which influences serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine). I have never taken a mood stabilizer/anticonvulsant (such as lithium or Depakote), or had shock treatments or psychosurgery. "Depression these days is curable," people told me. "You take antidepressants the way you take aspirin for a headache." Depression these days is treatable; you take antidepressants the way you take chemotherapy for cancer. They sometimes do miraculous things, but the treatment can be painful and difficult, and inconsistent in its results. Trying out different medications makes you feel like a dartboard. "If many remedies are prescribed for an illness," Chekhov wrote, "you may be certain that the illness has no cure."

Side effects arrive with the first pill and sometimes fade away with time. The real effects, at best, fade in with time. We cannot predict which medications will work for whom. Zoloft made me feel as though I'd had fifty-five cups of coffee. Paxil gave me diarrhea, but fortunately Xanax, though it made me exhausted, was also constipating. Paxil seemed better than Zoloft, and I soon adjusted to its making me feel as though I'd had *eleven* cups of coffee—which was definitely better than feeling as though I couldn't brush my own teeth. Only after a year did I discover Effexor, which made me appreciate that Paxil had been only partly effective for me. The side effects for which antidepressants are known (tension, irascibility, sexlessness, headaches, indigestion) are easily confused with the complaints for which they are taken (anxiety, irritability, and sexlessness, accompanied sometimes by headaches and indigestion), and so it was easy for me to conclude, two weeks after I began on Effexor, that I was probably having an adverse reaction to the drug. Dr. Weiner suggested that I might be having no reaction at all to the drug. He said, "Let's try doubling your dose. If you don't feel terrible, we'll keep going up. If you do, we'll come straight down." I'm now on triple the original dose.

The most constant side effect of the SSRIs is sexual dysfunction, and it is a serious side effect. It is damaging to your existing relationships and hell if you want to get into a new one. It doesn't matter much when you're first recovering, when you have other things on your mind, but to get over unbearable pain at the cost of erotic pleasure is not a happy arrangement. Robert Boorstin, a senior adviser to the Secretary of the Treasury, is manic-depressive and is an outspoken advocate for the mentally ill, and he told me that during four years on Prozac he did not have an orgasm in intercourse—"which I considered a fairly major drawback."

Popular articles seem to suggest that the neurotransmitter serotonin is the key to happiness—that giving serotonin boosters to depressives is like giving iron to anemics, or insulin to diabetics. This is wrong. It appears that depressed people do not have low serotonin levels, which explains what would otherwise be a puzzling phenomenon. For three weeks, you're on Prozac, a drug that has an instant effect on your serotonin levels, and you feel as lousy as you did before. Then things improve. Why this delay? When the serotonin levels go up, the brain appears to reduce the number of receptors, or decreases the sensitivity of existing receptors, which suggests that the brain is seeking a balance between output and receptivity. Over-all serotonin function is probably not very different from what it was before—and yet there are important subtle changes. Indeed, the most plausible explanation for the SSRIs is that they work indirectly. The human brain is stupefyingly plastic: cells respecialize and change; they "learn" new patterns of responding. When you raise serotonin levels, and cause some receptors to close up shop, other things happen elsewhere in the brain, and those other things are presumed to correct the imbalance that makes you feel bad.

Less is known about an herb called St. John's wort (hypericum), which has become popular lately among fans of alternative medicine. "These treatments can sound batty," Tom Wehr, at the National Institute of Mental Health, acknowledges. "But, frankly, if you said to someone, 'I'd like to put wires on your head and run electricity through your brain to induce a seizure because I think that might help your depression,' and if that were not a well-established treatment, you might have a hard time getting it going."

But the precise mechanism of effect remains elusive even for the intensively studied mainstream pharmaceuticals. "It is in these subtle adaptations to nerve cells, these compensations meant to handle increased serotonin, that the actual healing process lies," Steve Hyman, the director of the N.I.M.H., says of the SSRIs, "just as a pearl results from the adaptation of an oyster to the irritation caused by a grain of sand." Bill Potter, who until recently headed a research group in clinical psychopharmacology at the N.I.M.H., says, "Drugs that work by very different mechanisms produce antidepressant effects. It is possible for drugs with acutely different spectrums of biochemical activity to produce very similar long-term effects. It's like a weather system. Something changes wind speeds or humidity, and you get a completely different kind of weather a hundred miles away, but even the best meteorologists can't calculate all the variables." There is an ongoing quest for drugs that affect the brain with greater specificity. "The existing medications are just too indirect for us to fully understand how they are working," Potter says.

"It was amazing," Sarah Gold, a young editor, said of her first months on Wellbutrin, a drug that affects the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine but not serotonin. "I could pick up the phone and make calls—my life was no longer governed by fear. It was like my first experience of sunlight." But she was one of those people for whom medication is effective for only a limited time. She got a lift again from Effexor, but that, too, wore off after a year or so. "One of my roommates told me I had a black aura and she couldn't stand to be in the house when I was up in my room," she recalled. Gold went through other combinations of medications, only to end up taking Wellbutrin again, along with Zoloft and small doses of Risperdal. Sometimes, especially when she is dancing—and she is a wonderful dancer—she reaches the unsustainable height of normal feelings. Having lived them, she says, "I have them to aspire to."

One woman who works in the mental-health field and takes a panoply of SSRIs and mood stabilizers told me, "I have two children who also suffer from this disease, and I don't want them to think it's a reason for not having a good life. I get up every single day and make breakfast for my kids. Some days I can keep going, and some days I have to go back to bed afterward. I come into this office at some point every day. Sometimes I miss a few hours, but I've never missed a whole day from depression." We were in a cubicle at the hospital where she works. Her eyes were wide as she held forth. Her hands, folded in her lap, trembled from all the medicines she was on at the time. She soon had tears rolling down her face but went right on speaking. "One day last week, I woke up and it was really bad. I managed to get out of bed, to walk to the kitchen, counting every step, to open the refrigerator. And then all the breakfast things were near the back of the refrigerator, and I just couldn't reach that far. When my kids came in, I was just standing there, staring into the refrigerator."

Two separate but inseparable matters come into play here: depression and personality. Some people are disabled by levels of depression that others can handle, and some contrive to function despite serious symptoms. Antidepressants help those who help themselves. To take medications as part of the battle is to battle fiercely, and to refuse them is as ludicrous as entering a modern war on horseback. "It may be a sign of character, not of weakness, to know when you have to ask for help," says Martha Manning, whose book, "Undercurrents," chronicles her depression.

Two years before my first severe episode, a friend with an apparently terrific life, a regular old Richard Cory, committed suicide. It was no cry for help: he slit his wrists crosswise, and then went up to the roof of his building and jumped off. Suicide is a seductress, and those who have sailed near it stay alive only when they stop up their ears and flee from its Siren song. Even with chemical assistance, it's a fight against the wind and the tide to stay off the rocks. I don't believe that this friend's life had become more intolerable than Manning's, or mine. His life was not, however, strong enough in him to defy annihilation, and our lives, so far, are.

It is possible to keep yourself alive without modern technologies, but the price can be high. At a cocktail party in London, I saw an acquaintance and mentioned to her that I was writing this article. "I had terrible depression," she said. I asked her what she had done about it. "I didn't like the idea of medication," she said. "My problem was stress-related. So I decided to eliminate all the stresses in my life." She counted off on her fingers. "I quit my job," she said. "I broke up with my boyfriend and never really looked for another one. I gave up my roommate and moved to a smaller place. I stopped going to parties that run late. I dropped most of my friends. I gave up, pretty much, on makeup and clothes." I was looking at her in bewilderment. "It sounds bad, but I'm much less afraid than before," she went on, and she looked proud. "I'm in perfect health, really, and I did it without pills."

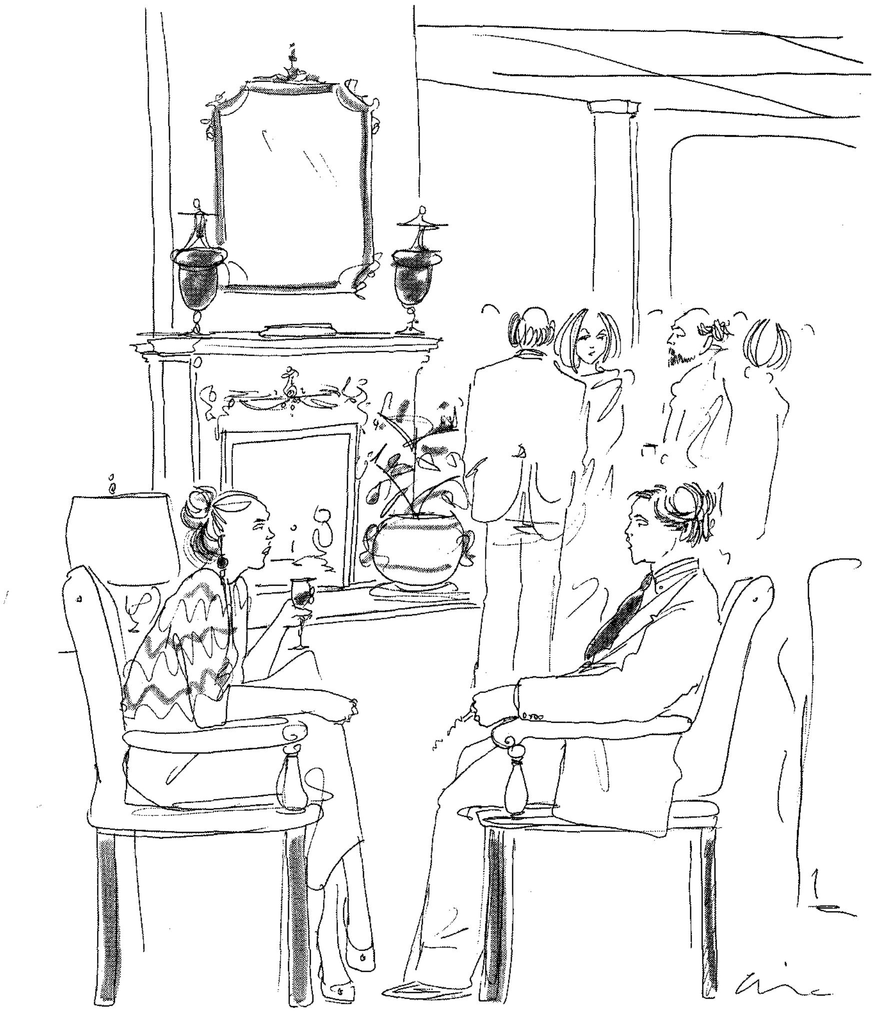
Someone who was standing in our group grabbed her by the arm. "That's completely crazy. That's the craziest thing I've ever heard. You must be crazy to be doing that to your life," he said. Is it crazy to avoid the behaviors that make you crazy?

INCONVENIENTLY, I had a reading tour to do after that birthday, and antidepressants usually take about a month to kick in. Still, I was determined to get through it, because I believed that, meds or no meds, if I started giving up on things I would give up on everything and die. Before the first reading, in New York, I spent four hours taking a bath, and then a friend helped me take a cold shower, and then I went and read. I felt as though I had baby powder in my mouth, and I couldn't hear very well, and I kept thinking I might faint, but I did it. Then I went to bed for three days. Though I could keep the tension under control if I took enough Xanax, I still found mundane activities nearly impossible. I woke up every day in a panic, early, and needed a few hours to conquer my fear before getting out of bed. But I could force myself out in public for an hour or two in the evening.

I had thought I could not possibly go to California for a reading the next week. My father took me there: he got me on and off the plane and to the hotel. So drugged up that I was almost asleep, I could manage these changes, which would have been inconceivable a week earlier. I knew that the more I managed to do, the less I would want to die. During my first dinner in San Francisco, I suddenly felt my depression lift. I chose my own food. I had been spending days on end with my father, but I had no idea what had been happening in his life, except me; depression is a disease of self-obsession. We talked that night as though we were catching up after months apart. When I finally went to bed, I was almost ecstatic. I had some chocolates from my mini-bar, wrote a letter. I felt ready for the world.

The next morning, I felt just as bad as I had ever felt. My father helped me get out of bed and turned on the shower. He tried to get me to eat, but I was too frightened to chew. I managed to drink some milk. These days, a quarter of a milligram of Xanax will put me to sleep for eight hours. That day, I took seven milligrams of Xanax and was still so tense I couldn't sit still. Dr. Wiener had by then started me on Navane, an antipsychotic drug that we hoped would allow me to take the Xanax less often. (I was then taking it every forty-five minutes or so, and in higher doses at bedtime.) The perpetual sensation of tension was completely exhausting, and the cumulative sedative effects of the Xanax and the Navane began to overwhelm me.

The third week of my tour, I lost the ability to remain upright for very long. I would walk for a few minutes and then I would have to lie down. I could no more control that need than I could the need to breathe. At my readings, I would cling to the podium. I would start skipping paragraphs to get through. When I was done, I would sit in a chair and hold on to the seat. As soon as I could leave the room, on any excuse, I would lie down again, often on a bathroom floor. I remember going for a walk with a friend outside Berkeley, hoping that nature might do me good. I had not left my bed for the previous fifty-eight hours; because I'd reduced my Xanax substantially, I was beginning to experience high anxiety again. We got out of my friend's car and walked for almost fifteen minutes, and then I couldn't go any farther. I lay down, fully dressed in nice clothes, in the mud. "Please let me stay here," I said, and I didn't care about standing up ever again. For an hour I lay in that mud, feeling the water seep through, and then my friend pretty much carried me back to the car. Those same nerves that had been scraped raw now seemed to be wrapped in lead.



"Your husband speaks highly of you."

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During my reading tour, I took a lot of cold showers, which got me through the necessary hours. As soon as I could drag myself out of bed, I'd do exercises or, if I could manage it, I'd go to a gym. I felt as though the exercise filtered the depression out of my blood, helped me to get cleaner. "Most people feel that," Norman Rosenthal, at the N.I.M.H., says. "It's very strong anecdotally."

In the end, I cancelled only one reading. Between November 1st and December 15th, I visited eleven cities. Doing those readings was the most difficult endeavor of my life. My publisher's publicist, who had organized my reading tour, came with me for more than half of it, cheering me through; my father came with me the rest of the time, and when we were apart he called me every few hours. I was never alone for long. The knowledge that I was loved was not in itself a cure, but without it I would not have been able to complete the tour. I would have found a place to lie down in the woods and I would have stayed there until I froze and died. Recovery depends enormously on support. The depressives I've met who have done the best were cushioned with love. Nothing taught me more about the love of my father and my friends than my own depression.

AFTER Thanksgiving, I felt better earlier in the day, and for longer, and more often. My great-aunt Beatrice is remarkable because she's ninety-seven and lives alone; gets up and gets dressed every day; will walk as much as sixteen blocks. Emerging from a depression, you get up and get dressed every day, but this triumph no more implies that you're leading your regular life than Aunt Bea's ability to dress up for lunch implies that she is the all-night dancer she was at seventeen.

The terror lifted in mid-December. Whether that was because the Paxil had really kicked in or because the reading tour was over, I do not know. The poet Jane Kenyon, who suffered from devastating depressions, wrote, "With the wonder and bitterness of someone pardoned for a crime she did not commit I come back to marriage and friends . . . to my desk, books, and chair." So in mid-December I walked into a Christmas party on the Upper West Side and I had an O.K. time. I took hope not from the O.K. time I was having but from the fact that I was having it. I had lost eighteen pounds, and now I was putting on weight. My father and my friends congratulated me on my progress. I thanked them. Privately, however, I was convinced that only the worst symptoms were gone. I was back to about where I had been in September, except that now I understood how bad it could get. I was determined never again to go through such a thing.

Accuracy of perception is not an evolutionary priority. Too optimistic a world view results in foolish risk-taking, but moderate optimism gives you a strong selective advantage. "Normal human thought and perception," Shelley Taylor writes in her 1989 book, "Positive Illusions," "is marked not by accuracy but by positive self-enhancing illusions about the self, the world, and the future. Moreover . . . these illusions are not merely characteristic of human thought; they appear actually to be adaptive." As she notes, "The mildly depressed appear to have more accurate views of themselves, the world, and the future than do normal people. [They] clearly lack the illusions that in normal people promote mental health and buffer them against setbacks."

The phase of depressive realism that I entered after Christmas is the dangerous time. During the worst of my depression, when I could hardly eat, I could not have done myself real harm. In this emerging period, I was feeling well enough for suicide. I could push myself to do pretty much all of what I had always been able to do, but I was unable to experience pleasure. Now I had the energy to wonder *why* I was pushing myself, and I could find no good reasons. One February evening, an acquaintance persuaded me to attend a party. I went to prove my own gaiety, and for several hours kept up every appearance of sharing in the fun that others were having. When I came home, I felt a return of panic, and a sadness that felt almost menacing. In the bathroom, I threw up repeatedly, as though my acute understanding of my own loneliness were a toxin; and when I tried to catch my breath I inhaled my own bile. I lay on the bathroom floor for about twenty minutes, and then I crawled out and lay down on my bed. It was clear to me that I was going crazy again, and the awareness tired me further; but I knew that it was bad to let the craziness run wild. I needed to hear another voice, which could penetrate my fearful isolation. I didn't want to call my father, because I knew he would worry. I picked up the phone and, shaking, dialled one of my oldest friends. It was about three-thirty in the morning. "Hello?" she said.

"Hi," I said, and paused.

"Has something happened?" she asked.

It was immediately clear that I could not explain. "I've got to go," I said, and hung up.

Later, I climbed laboriously up to my roof and wrapped myself around a pipe. As the sun came up, I realized that if you lived in New York there was no point in attempting suicide from the top of a six-story building. Drenched with sweat and developing what would soon become a raging fever, I returned to my bedroom. I knew that the voice of reason was the voice of reason; that depression was ludicrous; and that it would be sad for my father to have worked so hard at saving me and not to have succeeded. I had promised to cut up lamb chops for him someday; he had never broken a promise to me, and that, finally, led me downstairs. When I called my old friend, the next day, to apologize, she demanded an explanation. I could not explain. She told me I had gone too far, and did not speak to me for two years.

It is hard to talk to friends about depression during depression, so there's solace to be found in strangers. In recent years, support groups have proliferated. Mood Disorders Support Group, Inc. (MDSG), is the largest such organization in the United States, with more than a hundred support-group meetings annually. I never went to one when I was ill, but in researching this piece I went to the MDSG/New York meetings at Beth Israel Medical Center for eight weeks at seven-thirty on Friday night, which is when depressed people are not having dates. Members pay four dollars, get a sticky label bearing their first names only (to further protect privacy, I've changed those names), and go into a room with about a dozen others and a facilitator.

This crowd looked as run-down as it felt, especially in the hospital light. At one meeting, Jaime talked first. Forced to resign from his job with "a government agency" after missing too many days, Jaime had been on disability leave for three years. People wouldn't understand. He pretended to have his old job—didn't answer the phone during the day. "If I couldn't keep up appearances," he said, "I'd kill myself." Maggie, who was too depressed to talk, pulled her knees up under her chin.

John, who came often and spoke seldom, had been stroking his coat all evening. At forty, he had never had a full-time job. Two weeks ago, he'd announced

HUES FROM ABROAD

The German Expressionist painter Gabriele Münter, who was born in 1877, in Berlin, into an enlightened family, spent her life becoming what few women of her generation had the encouragement or the connections or the financial resources to become: an artist. During the first decades of the twentieth century, she travelled widely in Europe—often by bicycle, and often in the company of her lover of a dozen years, Wassily Kandinsky—and produced a series of rich, poetic landscapes. She also painted an array of still-lifes, interiors, and portraits, such as this "Girl with Doll," from the winter of 1908. Münter's original combinations of color reflect the influence of the Fauvists, particularly Matisse, but the emotional register of these paintings is all her own. A selection of them will remain on display at the Milwaukee Art Museum through March 1st and will then travel to Columbus, Richmond, and San Antonio.

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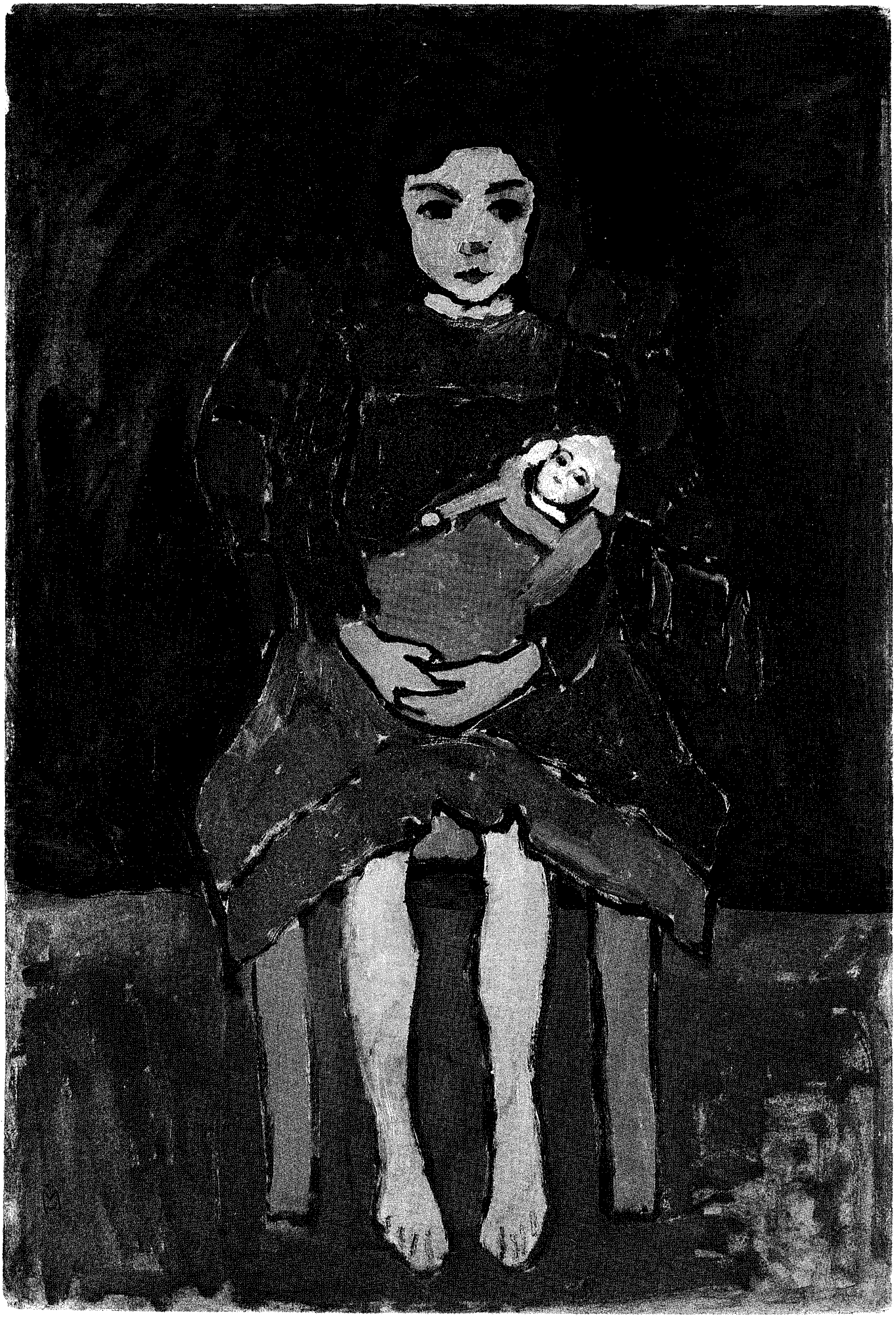


that he was about to take one, be like a normal person. We'd told him to go for it, but tonight he said that it was just too frightening. Maggie asked whether his moods improved on vacation. "I've never had a vacation," he said. He shuffled his feet. "I'm sorry. I mean, I guess I've never really had anything to take a vacation from."

Anne said, "I hear people talking about cycling, and I feel really jealous. For me, it's never been like that. I was a morbid, unhappy, anxious child. What's the point?" She was on Nardil, and had found that Catapres-TTS in microdoses saved her from heavy sweating, a side effect. She had originally been on lithium but had gained about fifteen pounds a month, and stopped. Someone thought she should try Depakote, which can be helpful with Nardil, even though the Physicians' Desk Reference discourages the combination. No one could tell her "the point."

A longtime MDSG member, Polly, asked the group, "Do you have friends outside?" Only one other person and I said that we did. Polly said, "I try to make new friends, but I don't know how it works. I took Prozac, and it worked for a year, and then it stopped. I think I did more that year, but I lost it." She was sad and sweet-natured and intelligent—clearly a lovely person, as someone told her encouragingly. "How do you meet people, besides here?" she wanted to know. Before I could answer, she added, "And, once you've met them, what do you talk about?"

And then it was Howie's turn. He looked around, but you could tell that he wasn't seeing any of us. His wife had brought him here, hoping it would help, and she was waiting outside. "I feel," he said, in a flat voice sounding like a slowed-down old record-player, "as though I died a few weeks ago but my body hasn't found out yet."

The basic feeling at the support group—I have my mind today, do you have yours?—was as familiar as a native language, and, almost in spite of myself, I began to relax into it. There is so much that cannot be said during depression, that can be intuited only by others who know about it. "If I were on crutches, they wouldn't ask me to dance," one woman said about her family's relentless efforts to get her out. We all held each other up with what we said.

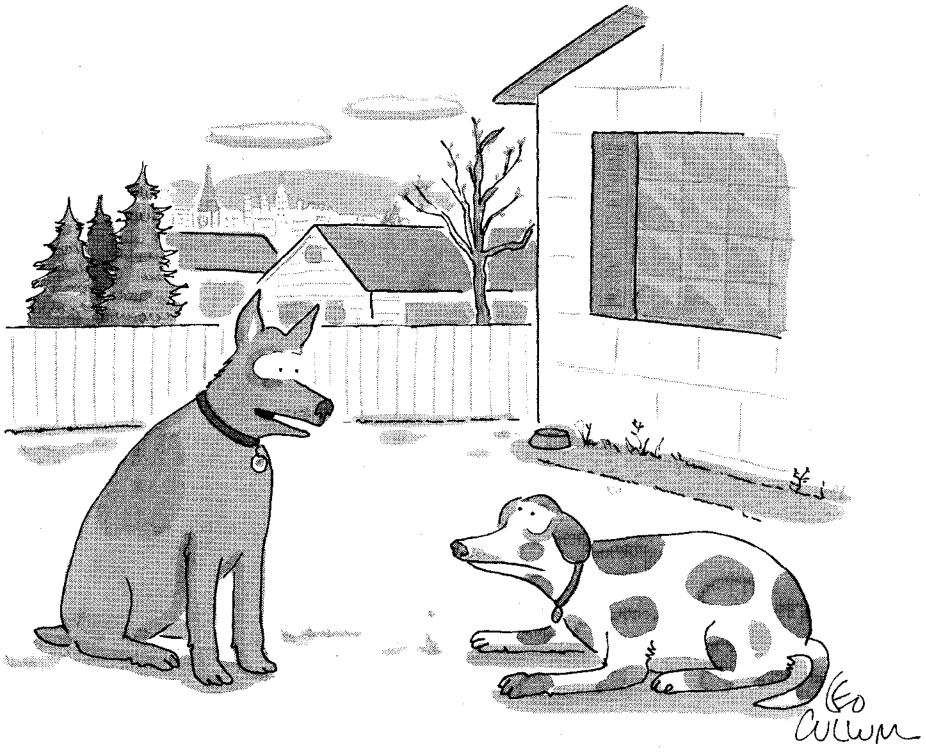
ROLLING
STONES

"Two Stones tickets, please, senior discount."

TALK is not cheap, medication is not cheap, and often even the two together are not enough. Only one person at MDSG had tried electroconvulsive therapy, or ECT, and the others were mostly too upset by the thought of it even to discuss it. Most people I met elsewhere who had done ECT, however, were enthusiasts. "I didn't want to die because I hated myself—I wanted to die because I loved myself enough to want this pain to end," Martha Manning says of the day she found the address of a gun shop. "I listened to my daughter singing in the shower and knew that if I killed myself I would stop that song. The next day, I checked myself in for ECT." Antidepressants are effective about seventy per cent of the time. Among people who are severely depressed, ECT seems to work about seventy-five per cent of the time or more. It is used as a recourse for people who have not had success with medications. Patients normally get six to twelve treatments over about a month. ECT often works much more rapidly than medication; its effects can be sustained with meds.

After some routine exams and blood work, a cardiogram, often a chest X-ray for older patients, and some neuroanesthesia-related tests in a hospital, a patient judged suitable for ECT signs elaborate consent forms. The patient is taken to the ECT suite, usually in the morning. After he has been hooked up to monitors, nurses put an electrolyte jelly on his temples, and then electrodes are attached. A short-acting general anesthetic, which puts the patient out completely for about ten minutes, is administered, along with a muscle relaxant to prevent physical spasms. (The only movement during treatment is a slight wiggling of the fingers and toes.) The patient is connected to EEG and EKG monitors. The electrical stimulus usually lasts no more than several seconds. It causes a seizure in the brain, which usually lasts about fifty seconds—long enough to change brain chemistry, not long enough to create trouble. Why ECT works is unclear, but it seems to have a strong enhancing effect on the major neurotransmitters. Within ten minutes, the patient wakes up in the recovery room. Once he's awake, he's given breakfast and taken to his room—"feeling hung over, knowing it's going to be a Tylenol day," Manning says. The session lasts about thirty minutes, from start to finish; afterward, there is real disorientation for about twenty minutes, and some minor memory loss, which is usually recovered during the day. In fact, the only lasting memory loss is usually of the ECT period itself; patients are often blurry about the whole treatment period.

ECT is considered easier and safer—especially in elderly patients—than antidepressants, and it is now sometimes done on an outpatient basis. But ECT is still the most stigma-loaded of the popular treatments. "You do feel like Frankenstein on the table there," Manning says. "And people don't want to hear about it. Nobody brings you casseroles when you're in for ECT. It's very isolating." But it can be miraculously effective. "Before, I was aware of every swallow of water, that it was just too much work," she goes on. "Afterward, I thought, Do regular people feel this way all the time? It's like you've been not in on a great joke for the whole of your life." The effects start quickly. "Vegetative symptoms got better fast, although mood took longer, then my body felt lighter; then I really wanted a Big Mac," Manning says. "I felt like I'd been hit by a truck, but that was, comparatively speaking, not so bad." And researchers have begun imagining a possible new-generation device that would accomplish the effects of ECT without the trauma. Robert Post, chief of biological psychiatry at the N.I.M.H., has been working on repeated transcranial magnetic stimulation, or R.T.M.S., which uses fluxes in magnetic fields to stimulate the brain without producing seizures. While electric current has to be turned up quite high to get through the scalp and the skull, magnetic fluxes travel through easily. Since R.T.M.S. avoids the brain seizure, it appears that there are no memory-loss side effects, and that alone makes it an attractive alternative.



"I can't explain it. I see that guy coming up the walkway and I go postal."

LIKE all illnesses, depression is a great equalizer, but I met no one who seemed a less likely candidate for it than Ted Winstead—thirty, a Northwestern graduate, soft-spoken, polite, good-natured, and good-looking. "So you want inside my head?" he wrote in a notebook once. "Welcome . . . Not exactly what you expected? It's not what I expected either." Six months after he graduated from college, his first depression hit him. In the seven years since, he has been hospitalized more than thirty times. He puts his hands up and presses hard on his forehead and the back of his head, then just above his ears. "It's like my head's in a vise, squeezing together. All I can do is obsess on the negative, and the pain is petrifying and physical. It's like I'm in a locked room and I can't get out and the walls are closing in and in and I'm being compressed and destroyed under the pressure."

His first episode came on abruptly: "I'd been to a movie, and on the way home I realized I might drive into a tree. I felt a weight pushing my foot down, someone pulling my hands around. I knew I couldn't drive home because there were too many trees, so I headed for the hospital." In the following years, Winstead went through every medication in the book and got nowhere. In the hospital, he tried to strangle himself. He finally had ECT, which made him briefly manic. "I attacked another patient and had to go into the quiet room for a while," he recalls. For the last five years, Winstead has been getting booster ECT whenever the depression hits—usually about every six weeks. When we met, he was also taking lithium, Wellbutrin, Adapin, Cytomel, and Synthroid. "ECT is totally safe and I would recommend it, but they're putting electricity into your head, and that's scary," he says. "I hate the memory problems. It gives me a headache. I keep journals so I can remember what happened. Otherwise, I'd never know."

Winstead was unable to work from late 1994 to the middle of 1996, but before this he researched and wrote part of a history book. "The people I've worked with and for have been really supportive, and have made allowances," he says. "Everyone was great: parents, friends, doctors. The attention has gotten me through."

First, you might try talking, then you might try pills, then ECT; at some point, you try the experimental odds and ends; then you try surgery. In the late nineteen-forties and early fifties, patients diagnosed with severe neuropsychiatric disorders were prime candidates for having their prefrontal lobes severed. In the heyday of lobotomies, about five thousand were performed annually in the United States, causing between two hundred and fifty and five hundred deaths a year. Psychosurgery lies under this shadow. When I first met Winstead, he was just back from having a cingulotomy. In that procedure, the scalp is frozen locally and the surgeon drills a small hole in the front of the skull. He then puts an electrode directly into the brain to destroy areas of tissue, usually measuring about eight by eighteen millimetres. The leading place for this surgery is Massachusetts General Hospital, and that is where Winstead was operated on by the neurosurgeon Rees Cosgrove. "About sixty to seventy per cent of patients have at least some response," Cosgrove told me. "Thirty per cent show marked improvement. This procedure is for people whose illness has failed to respond to everything thrown at it, so those are encouraging statistics." It is difficult to get into the cingulotomy protocol; Mass. General, the most active center, does only fifteen or twenty of the procedures a year. The surgery usually has a delayed effect, often showing benefits only several weeks, or even months, later. Like ECT, such surgery probably causes disruption of brain function, but how, exactly, this trauma causes a change for the better is not clear. "We don't understand the pathophysiology," Cosgrove says. "But the effect on other parts of the brain is indirect, whatever it is."

"I have real hopes for the cingulotomy," Winstead told me when we met. He was having a pretty good day, laughing from time to time in gentle self-deprecation. He pushed back his red hair to show me the scar near the front of his scalp, centered over his eyes. "I heard the drill going into my skull, like when you're at the dentist's office. I thought, This is creepy, and I asked to be put further under. So they did before they started burning my brain. I hope it works. If it doesn't, I have a plan for how to end it all, because I just can't keep going like this."

In the spring of 1995, I stopped taking drugs cold turkey. I knew that this was dumb, but I wanted desperately to find out again who I "really" was. At first, all I was conscious of was the awful withdrawal symptoms from the Xanax. I couldn't sleep for four days, and my eyes and stomach hurt, and my sense of balance was off. Unrelenting nightmares seemed to penetrate my wakefulness, and I kept sitting up abruptly with my heart pounding. Dr. Wiener had told me that when I was ready to go off the drugs I should do it gradually, but I was afraid that if I went slowly I'd never really make it.

It was a bad mistake. If you stimulate seizures in an animal every day, the seizures become automatic: the animal will go on having them even if you withdraw the stimulation. Similarly, a brain that has gone into depression several times may return to depression. Brain-imaging scans have indicated that depression changes both the structure and the biochemistry of the brain. Medication-responsive patients may cease to respond over the long term if they cycle on and off the medications; with each episode, there is a ten-per-cent increase in the risk that the depression will become chronic. "It's analogous to a primary cancer that's very drug-responsive but once it transforms itself and metastasizes is less responsive," Bob Post explains. "People worry about side effects from staying on medication for a lifetime, but these effects seem insubstantial compared with the lethality of undertreated depression. It would be like asking someone to go off his digitalis, seeing if he has another heart attack, and re-starting medication when his heart is too flabby to recuperate."

At this point, I entered what is commonly called "agitated depression." I developed in rapid succession all the typical symptoms—hatred, anguish, guilt, self-loathing. I stopped speaking to at least six people. I took to slamming down the phone when someone said something I didn't like. I criticized everyone. It was hard to sleep, because my mind was racing with tiny injustices from my past: irritability kept me awake every night, and the lack of sleep made me more irritable still.

It is not unusual for really depressed people to have no deep sleep at all. Does one sleep oddly just because of depression or does one sink into depression in part because of sleeping oddly? Many people occasionally wake up too early with a sensation of ominous dread; that momentary fearful, despairing state may be the closest that healthy people come to depression. "By not letting someone go to sleep, you extend the diurnal improvement," Tom Wehr, who heads sleep research at the N.I.M.H., says. "Though depressed people seek the oblivion of sleep, it is in sleep that the depression is maintained and intensified." There has been limited research in this area (because it is non-patentable and hence unprofitable), but studies suggest that manipulating the timing of sleep can be a way to treat depression.

In my agitated state, with my sleep disrupted and my time in the daylight altogether irregular, I found that I couldn't really concentrate on anything. I started doing my laundry every night, to keep busy. When I got a mosquito bite, I scratched it until it bled, then picked off the scab; I bit my nails so far down that my fingers were always bleeding. I had open wounds and scratches everywhere, though I never actually cut myself with a knife. Yet, being free of the vegetative

FALCON

Stumbling along a sidewalk clogged with snow,
I don't see him; then suddenly I do.
He pops from nowhere in the blizzard's wake,
gesticulates, guffaws, then turns to walk
the way I'm going, "so that we can talk."
He does all the talking—wants to tell
me of an apparition on his sill
that morning. "Talons! Wingspan of four feet!"
It seems some hefty bird of prey alit
and beat its wings against the windowpane—
not albatross, not eagle, but their kin.
I'm asking some vague question or other;
he interrupts: "The falcon was my mother.
Funny, huh." It's not a question; he
demands acknowledgment. And I agree;
I think the falcon was his mother, too.
That's settled; his decoding must be true.
We smile, then turn and trudge our separate ways
negotiating strata of mixed grays.

Metaphor and myth and déjà vu;
romantic notions of madness, too.
Wingstroke: the cruel diagonal, the slash
of entry into time, the gory gash
inflicted by a visionary claw
on winter's blankness. What was it he saw?
Wings agitated in their little storm,
a private blizzard in the public one,
swoosh of arrival or epiphany?
I don't dispute that some reality
alighted on his window sill. I see
his face light up: relief at recognition.
The vision came; he recognized the vision.
His wounds may still be throbbing. All the same,
he's like a person who retrieves a name
or crucial clue that he had thought was gone
from the fierce blizzard of oblivion.

—Rachel Hadas

symptoms of my breakdown, I did not imagine that I might still be depressed.

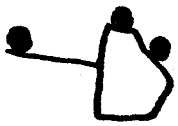
In retrospect, this seems odd, since I had developed the ultimate hallmark of depression, which is an obsession with suicide. I had had more than enough of life, and wanted to figure out how to end it with the least damage to those who loved me. I decided that a fatal disease would be a valid excuse for suicide. I knew that it would be devastating for my family and sad for my friends, but felt that they would understand, whereas I knew that if I did something while I was "healthy" they would not. I couldn't figure out how to give myself cancer or M.S., but I knew just how to get AIDS. The particular behavior I chose was related to my own neuroses, but the decision to behave in so systematic a way, with such a sustained hunger to die, was typical of agitated depression. After my first episode of unsafe sex, I had a burst of fear and called a good friend and told him what I had done. He talked me through it, and I went to bed. When I woke up in the morning, I felt much as I had felt on the first day of college or summer camp or a new job. This was to be the next phase of my life. There was something I genuinely wanted, and the end was at hand. Over the next three months, I took ever more direct risks. I was sorry to have no pleasure from encounters some of which I knew I would have once enjoyed. Casual with life, I also walked through Central Park at night, crossed highways against the traffic, and drank myself into unconsciousness.

In early October of 1995, after a bout of unpleasant unsafe sex, I realized that I might be infecting others. Dismayed at how numb I had become to their vulnerability, I again withdrew into physical isolation. I'd had four months to get infected; I'd had a total of about eighteen encounters; and knowing I would die had, ironically, diminished the urgency of my wish to die. I put that period of my life behind me, became gentler again. On my thirty-second birthday, I looked at the many friends who had come to celebrate it, and was able to smile, knowing I would never have a birthday again. The celebrations were tiring; the gifts I left in their wrappings.

When major depression with high-level anxiety—in the argot of the clinicians—started coming around the second time, I recognized it. I didn't want to go back on meds, and tried to ride it out. I knew about three days ahead of the total crash that I was going all the way down. I started taking Paxil. I called Dr. Wiener. I warned my father. I addressed the practicalities: losing your mind, like losing your keys, is a hassle. Out of the terror I heard my voice holding on tight when friends called. "I'll have to cancel Wednesday," I said. "I'm afraid of lamb chops again." The symptoms came fast. In about a month, I lost a fifth of my body weight—some thirty pounds. I had just moved into the new house I'd been restoring for five years. I stayed there three nights, then had to move in with my father again. There was a lot of talk about hospitalization, which terrified me further: I believed that once I went into Payne Whitney I'd never return, and I didn't want to die slowly in a padded room.

Dr. Wiener started me on Effexor, and also added BuSpar, an antianxiety medication. Anxiety is not paranoia; people with anxiety disorders assess their own position in the world much as people without them do. What changes in anxiety is how one feels about that assessment. It's possible to distinguish between anxiety and depression, but, according to Jim Ballenger, a leading expert on anxiety, "they're fraternal twins." George Brown, of the University of London, has said succinctly, "Depression is usually a response to a current loss. Anxiety is a response to a threat of future loss." About half the patients with anxiety or panic disorders develop major depression within five years. The diseases appear to have overlapping genotypes.

Depression exacerbated by anxiety has a much higher suicide rate than depression alone, and is much harder to recover from. "If you're having panic every day," Ballenger says, "it's gonna bring Hannibal to his knees." One in ten Americans has a panic attack of some kind every year. Because the locus coeruleus in the brain, which controls much of norepinephrine production, has a strong influence on lower-bowel function, almost half of panic-disorder patients have irritable-bowel symptoms as well. "Two out of three times, life events are implicated in the onset of panic disorder, and it's always a loss of personal security," Ballenger says.



Xanax is, in my view, a lifesaver. There is popular prejudice against the benzodiazepines, partly because they have often been given without proper patient evaluation. They can be addictive, so withdrawing from them abruptly can be an enormous problem; some can affect short-term memory. Despite these drawbacks, the rapid relief they provide is extraordinary, and for people who are not inclined toward abuse they save lives. "Nonsense, nonsense," Dr. Wiener said when I dithered about Xanax. "Take it as I tell you to and we'll deal with these problems when your symptoms have lifted."

When I was heading for my second breakdown, everyone, including Dr. Wiener, told me firmly that I should find a new shrink for talking therapy. Finding a new shrink when you are feeling up and communicative is burdensome, but doing it when you are in the throes of a major depression is beyond the pale. Nonetheless, I was lucky that I could afford to follow that advice. Most managed-care companies are keen on medication, which is, comparatively speaking, cheap, and are not very keen on talking therapies or hospitalizations.

"I spend more and more time on the phone with managed-care companies trying to justify patients' need to stay in the hospital," Sylvia Simpson, a physician at Johns Hopkins, says. "Frequently, when a patient is still very, very ill and unable to function—if he's not acutely suicidal that day, authorization for coverage of further in-patient stay is denied." Depressed people are usually in no condition to argue their own cases with insurers—and depression is one expensive illness. My first breakdown cost me five months of work, five thousand dollars' worth of visits to the psychopharmacologist, twelve thousand dollars of talking therapy, thirty-five hundred dollars for medications. My guess is that I've used up about seventy thousand dollars on this disease so far.

The result of treatment dictated by cost-economizing managed-care companies is that more and more people are taking medication with little context. "Medicines treat depression," said the therapist I now see. "I treat depressives." More people are treated for depression now because it is more acceptable and medicines are available, and, over all, public health may be going up in consequence, but the idea that the option of psychotherapy can go on a back burner is "lunacy," according to Kay Jamison, the author of "An Unquiet Mind" and an authority on manic depression; she believes that she would be dead without psychotherapy. Therapy helps someone to make sense of the new self attained on meds and to accept the loss of self that occurs during a breakdown. Antidepressants are not amnesiac drugs. If real experience has triggered your descent into depression, you have a human yen to understand it even when you have overcome acute symptoms. Dr. Robert Klitzman, of Columbia University, says, "Pills should not obviate insight; they should enable insight."

The week of my H.I.V. test, I was taking between twelve and eighteen milligrams of Xanax every day, so that I could sleep most of the time. On Thursday of that week, I woke up at four in the afternoon and checked my messages. The nurse from my doctor's office: "Your cholesterol is down, cardiogram is normal, and your H.I.V. test turned out fine." I had to call her the next morning to make sure that that hadn't been another Xanax dream.

I knew then that I wanted to live, and I was grateful for the news. But I went right on feeling terrible for two more months. Gritting my teeth against what is quaintly termed "suicidal ideation," I decided I was sufficiently well to go to Turkey to do research, but I went feeling infinitely burdened by the work I had there. Then, in the perfect Turkish sunshine, the depression finally evaporated. That was the last I heard from it.

In a poem entitled "Back" Jane Kenyon writes, "Suddenly I fall into my life again, like a vole picked up by a storm then dropped three valleys and two mountains away from home. I can find my way back. I know I will recognize the store where I used to buy milk and gas. I remember the house and barn, the rake, the blue cups and plates, the Russian novels I loved so much, and the black silk nightgown that he once thrust into the toe of my Christmas stocking." And so it was for me: everything seemed strange, then became abruptly familiar, and I realized that the deep melancholy that had started when my mother got ill, had worsened when she died, had built beyond grief into despair, and had disabled me was not disabling me anymore. I was still sad about the sad things, but I was myself again.

"Pharmaceutical wonders are at work," Kenyon writes in another poem, "but I believe only in this moment of well-being. Unholy ghost, you are certain to come again . . . and turn me into someone who can't take the trouble to speak; someone who can't sleep, or who does nothing but sleep; can't read, or call for an appointment for help. There is nothing I can do against your coming." You are never the same once you have acquired breakdown knowledge. We are told to learn self-reliance, but it's tricky if you

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SHOWCASE BY MAX VADUKUL

FIZZ KID

A star has to shine, and Natasha Richardson, one of the finest English actresses of her generation, certainly does. Although she was educated at the rigorous St. Paul's Girls School and at the Central School of Speech and Drama, both in London, her acting taps into the raffish bohemian gene pool that is her inheritance: she is the daughter of Vanessa Redgrave and the late director Tony Richardson, the granddaughter of Sir Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson.

In films and onstage, in such roles as the putative revolutionary Patty Hearst and the hooker with heart Anna Christie, Richardson has taken chance after chance. For the last couple of years, she has been concentrating on her family—she and her husband, the actor Liam Neeson, have two young children—but soon she'll be in the public eye again. Her newest movie, "The Parent Trap," is scheduled for release late this year. And, in February, when the British director Sam Mendes transforms Club Expo, on Times Square, into a louche Weimar watering hole, she'll star as the restless and world-weary English singer Sally Bowles in a revival of John Kander and Fred Ebb's "Cabaret." Richardson made an unforgettable musical-theatre début in 1986, as the upper-crust ice maiden Tracy Lord in the London production of "High Society," the Cole Porter musical based on "The Philadelphia Story." Her husky voice and her almond eyes are compelling instruments: they can lift the heart as well as wrench it.

"What good is sitting alone in your room? / Come hear the music play," Sally sings in "Cabaret," giving voice to the insouciance of the decadent era that Christopher Isherwood paid homage to in his "Berlin Stories," the musical's original source. Sally, who wears the mask of caprice, is funny and forlorn; her cabaret, the Kit Kat Klub, is (perhaps not unlike the club world of today) an expression less of hedonism than of nihilism. "Why should I wake up?" another character sings. "This dream is going so well." That fizz, with all the gradations of loss and longing and will behind it, is Richardson's expressive terrain.

—John Lahr

have no self on which to rely. Friends, doctors, and my father have helped me, and some chemistry has wrought a readjustment, and I feel O.K. for the moment, but the recurring nightmares are no longer about the things that will happen *to* me, from outside, but about the things that happen *in* me. What if tomorrow I wake up as a manure beetle? Every morning starts with a check for cancers, a momentary anxiety about which nightmares might be true. It's as if my self, like the friend I called that late night in 1995, had said, "Don't push it, don't count on me for much, I have problems of my own to take care of."

I hope not to have to go off my medications. I'm not addicted, because addicts are prone to symptoms caused by the removal of the drug, but I am dependent, because without the drug I would probably develop symptoms. I have some side effects, which may eventually become intolerable. I get terrible hives, which seem to be getting worse, and have to apply cortisone creams and ointments every six hours; I also have to take antihistamines several times a day, and am therefore perpetually groggy. The way that SSRIs undermine your capacity for sustained sexual fantasy means that you can climax only when you're in the presence of someone to whom you're strongly attracted. I gain weight more easily than I used to. I sweat more. My memory, which was never good, is impaired: I frequently forget in the middle of a sentence what I am saying. I get headaches often, and occasional muscular cramps. It's not ideal, but it seems to have put a real wall between me and depression.

Slowly, I catch up. When two friends died recently, both in freak accidents, I felt sad, but to feel just grief was almost (this sounds terrible, but it is true) a kind of joy. "Will you become depressed doing your depression piece?" everyone has asked me. I have not. I have felt blue sometimes, and on some days I have chosen not to work on this difficult subject, but I feel far away from the reality described here, and, were it not for notes I wrote when I was ill, I would have been unable to describe it fully.

Once you stop being depressed, you can notice in isolation those sensations which were previously blurred. What is it like to feel tired? To be frightened by something frightening? To be hungry, annoyed, hung over, bored? You learn them all over again. And what is it like to hope? Hope is the belief in a future without loss; it defends against its oblique cousin dread—the dread of a recurrence. "I am overcome by ordinary contentment," Jane Kenyon has written. "What hurt me so terribly all my life until this moment? How I love the small, swiftly beating heart of the bird singing in the great maples; its bright, unequivocal eye."

Joseph Farris

"I was an investigative journalist until they investigated me."

I WONDER constantly whether these experiences have served any purpose. Is depression a mood state that nature or God willed us to have for some reason? Is it useful? "Organisms have a selective advantage if they have different states that give them the upper hand in particular circumstances," Randolph Nesse, of the University of Michigan, says. Is depression one of those states? Is it merely a derangement, like cancer, or can it be defensive, like nausea? Some people argue that it's best seen as a mixture of maladaptive or pathological withdrawal and so-called conservation withdrawal, which may be useful in some circumstances: hibernating, avoiding danger, saving energy.

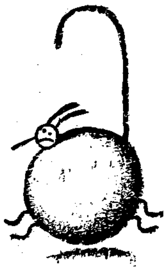
This is an idea that has been elaborated in Emmy Gut's book "Productive and Unproductive Depression," which proposes that the long pause brought about by a depression causes people to change their lives in useful ways, especially after a loss. It can draw people away from unproductive pursuits and relationships. For her, the question is which depressions should be normalized and which should be left untouched. There are probably people who don't have enough anxiety and sadness to keep them out of trouble, and it seems likely that they don't do well. Leprosy is a disease in which you do not feel enough physical pain: lepers become deformed and then die because crucial warnings do not get through to them. I suspect that the most important function of grief is in the formation of attachment. If you do not fear loss, you cannot love intensely. Homesickness showed how much I loved my parents; losing my mother not only depressed me but also intensified my love for her and for people still alive.

We now identify as pathology many things that were previously accepted as personality. The supermodel has damaged our images of ourselves by setting unrealistic expectations, and the psychological supermodel is even more dangerous than the physical one. People are constantly examining their own minds and rejecting their own moods. The use of antidepressants is going up as people seek to normalize what used to be deemed normal. Thirty million people worldwide have been on Prozac, and millions more on the other SSRIs—not to mention a substantial number on non-SSRI antidepressants. SSRIs are now prescribed for homesickness, eating disorders, PMS, household pets who scratch too much, chronic joint pain, and ordinary grief. They are prescribed not only by psychiatrists but also by G.P.s and gynecologists; someone I met had been put on Prozac by his podiatrist. When T.W.A. Flight 800 went down, families waiting for news of their loved ones were offered drugs with the same palliative expression with which they might have been offered extra pillows or blankets.

Is the grand-scale social experiment of eliminating a state from the human mood spectrum dangerous? George Brown says, "Social systems can play a powerful role in generating both psychiatric and physical disorder. For example, in the U.K., the rate of major depression among single mothers is double that of women raising children with a partner. I have nothing against Prozac, but there needs to be a recognition that what may well be a rising tide of depression is related to the fact that basic social and psychological needs are not being met." More generally, modernity has wrought changes to which we are not yet adequately adapted; depression appears to increase far more rapidly in technological cultures than in others. "The investment to achieve modern life goals, the number of opportunities we have, is probably beyond the range our mind was designed to handle," Randolph Nesse says.

The question of what functions depression serves is not the same as the question of what functions antidepressants are coming to serve. Are they restoring the normal self or are they changing the self? It's said that everyone has the virtues of his faults. If one eliminates the faults, do the virtues go as well? "We are only at the dawn of pharmacological exuberance," Nesse says. "New medications that are being developed may likely make it quick, easy, cheap, and safe to block many unwanted emotions. We should be there within the next generation. And I predict we'll go for it, because if people can make themselves feel better they usually do. I could imagine the world in a few decades being a pharmacological utopia, controlling viciousness, fear, and pain. I can equally imagine people so mellowed out that they neglected all their social and personal responsibilities." Robert Klitzman says, "Not since Copernicus have we faced so dramatic a transformation. In centuries to come, there may be new societies that look back at us as creatures that were slaves to and crippled by uncontrolled emotions."

The survivors stay on pills, waiting. "I'm reconciled to a lifetime of medicine," Martha Manning says, suddenly fervent. "And I'm thankful. Sometimes I look at those pills and wonder, Is this all that stands between Hell and me? You don't defeat depression, you learn to manage it. When you come so close to taking your life, if you get it back you'd better claim it."

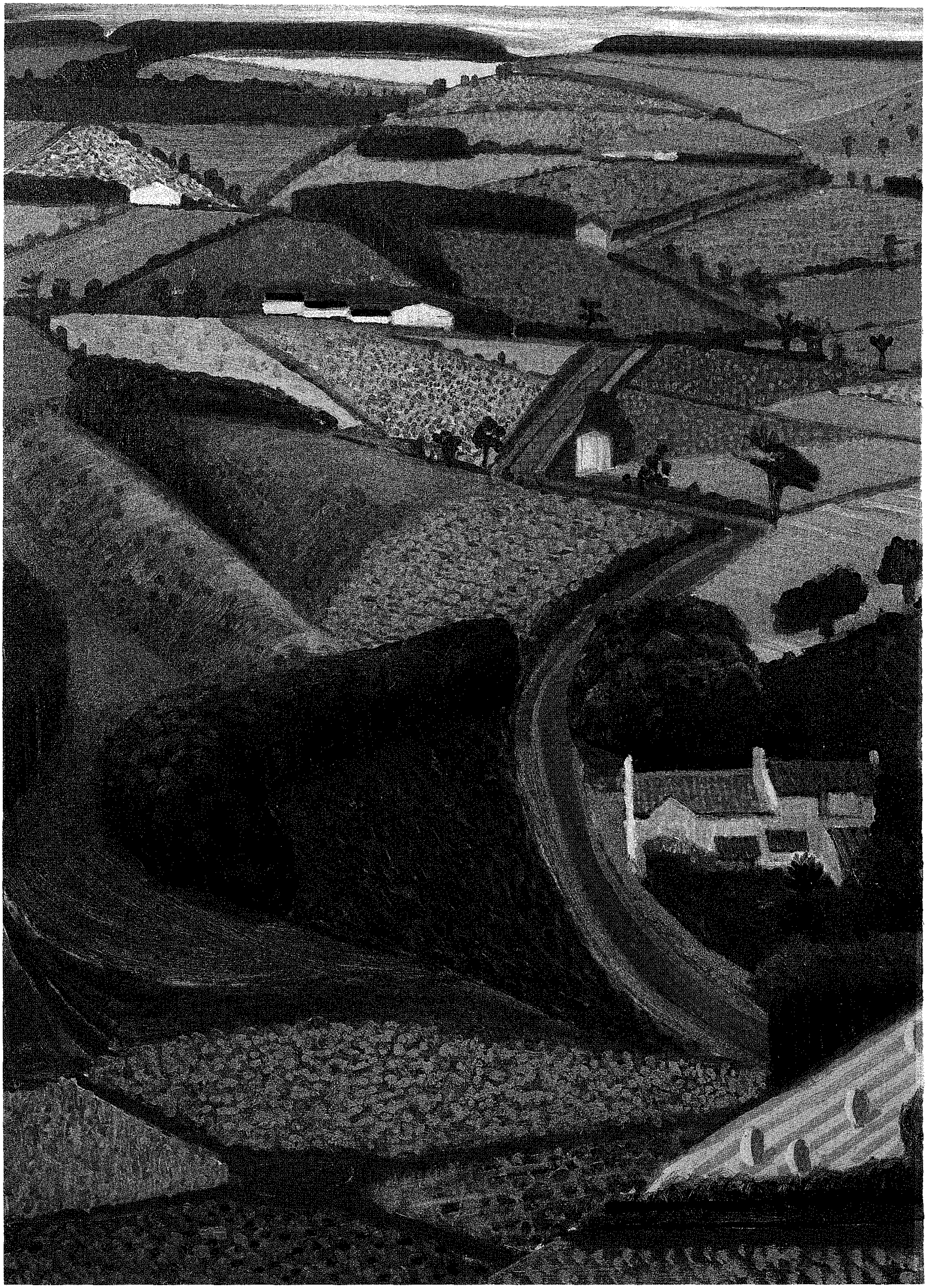


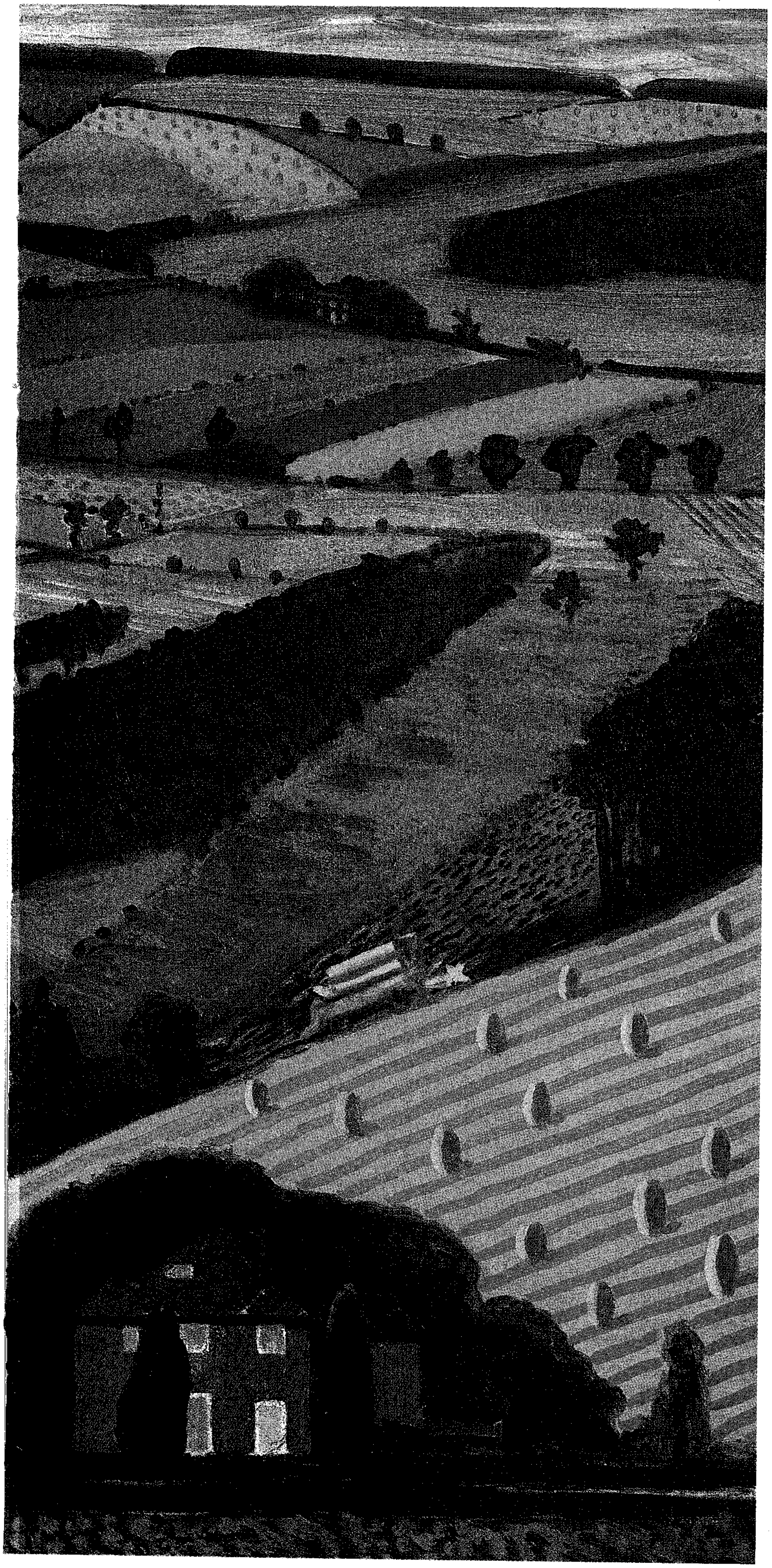
Striving to claim it, we hold on to the idea of productive depression, something not only normal but vital. "I lost a great innocence when I understood that I and my mind were not going to be on good terms for the rest of my life," Kay Jamison says, with a shrug. "I can't tell you how tired I am of character-building experiences. But I treasure this part of me. Whoever loves me loves me with this in it."

"My wife has never seen me severely depressed," Robert Boorstin says. "I've walked her through it, and other people have talked to her about what it's like. I've done my best to prepare her, because doubtless I'll have another depression. Sometime in the next forty years, I'm going to be crawling across the room again. And it scares me a lot, because the thought of being without your mind is a lot scarier than being without anything else. I mean, if somebody said to me, 'I'll take away your mental illness if you'll cut me off your leg,' I don't know whether I'd make the exchange. And yet, before I was ill, I was intolerant beyond comparison, arrogant beyond belief, with no understanding of frailties. I'm a better person as a result of having been through all this, but I would not recommend the experience."

"If I had it to do over, I wouldn't do it this way," Ted Winstead said the last time I saw him. I had spent the afternoon with him and his parents and his psychiatrist, and we were discussing the grim reality: that his first cingulotomy still hadn't worked, that he'd been hospitalized three times in the months after it, and that he might have to have a second surgery. In his gently courageous way, he was making plans to be up and running in six months. "I have this experience with my doctor that's been very good," he said gamely. "There really are up sides to depression. It's just hard to see them when you're in it."

On the happy day when we lose depression, we will lose a great deal with it. As the sun seems brighter and clearer when it comes on a rare day of English summer after ten months of gray skies than it can ever seem in the tropics, so recent happiness feels enormous and embracing and beyond anything I have ever imagined. In the course of my depression, I reached a strange point at which I could not see the line between my own tendency to theatricality and the reality of my illness. The line is still not clear, but there is someone or something here writing these words, a unionist me that held on until the rebel chemicals had been brought back into line. Some ropy fibre holds fast even when most of the self has been stripped from it; we know what chemistry is and how deep it runs, and yet anyone who lives through this knows that the shifting self reaches beyond serotonin and dopamine. I'm more confident, in some odd way, than I've ever imagined being. I do not think that I will ever again try to kill myself, nor do I think that I would give my life up readily if my plane crashed in a desert. I would struggle tooth and nail to survive. The opposite of depression is not happiness but vitality, and my life, as I write this, is vital, even when it's sad. I may wake up sometime next year without my mind again. But I know what is left of me when my mind is gone and my body is going. I was not brought up religious, and think that when you die you're dead, yet I have also discovered what I guess I would have to call a soul—something I had never imagined until one day, two and a half years ago, when Hell came to pay me a surprise visit. It's a precious discovery. This week, on a chilly night when I was overtired, I felt a momentary flash of hopelessness, and wondered, as I so often do, whether I was slipping; for a petrifying instant, a lightning-quick flash, I wanted a car to run me over, and I had to clench my teeth to stay on the sidewalk until the light turned green. Nevertheless, I cannot find it in me to regret entirely the course my life took. ♦





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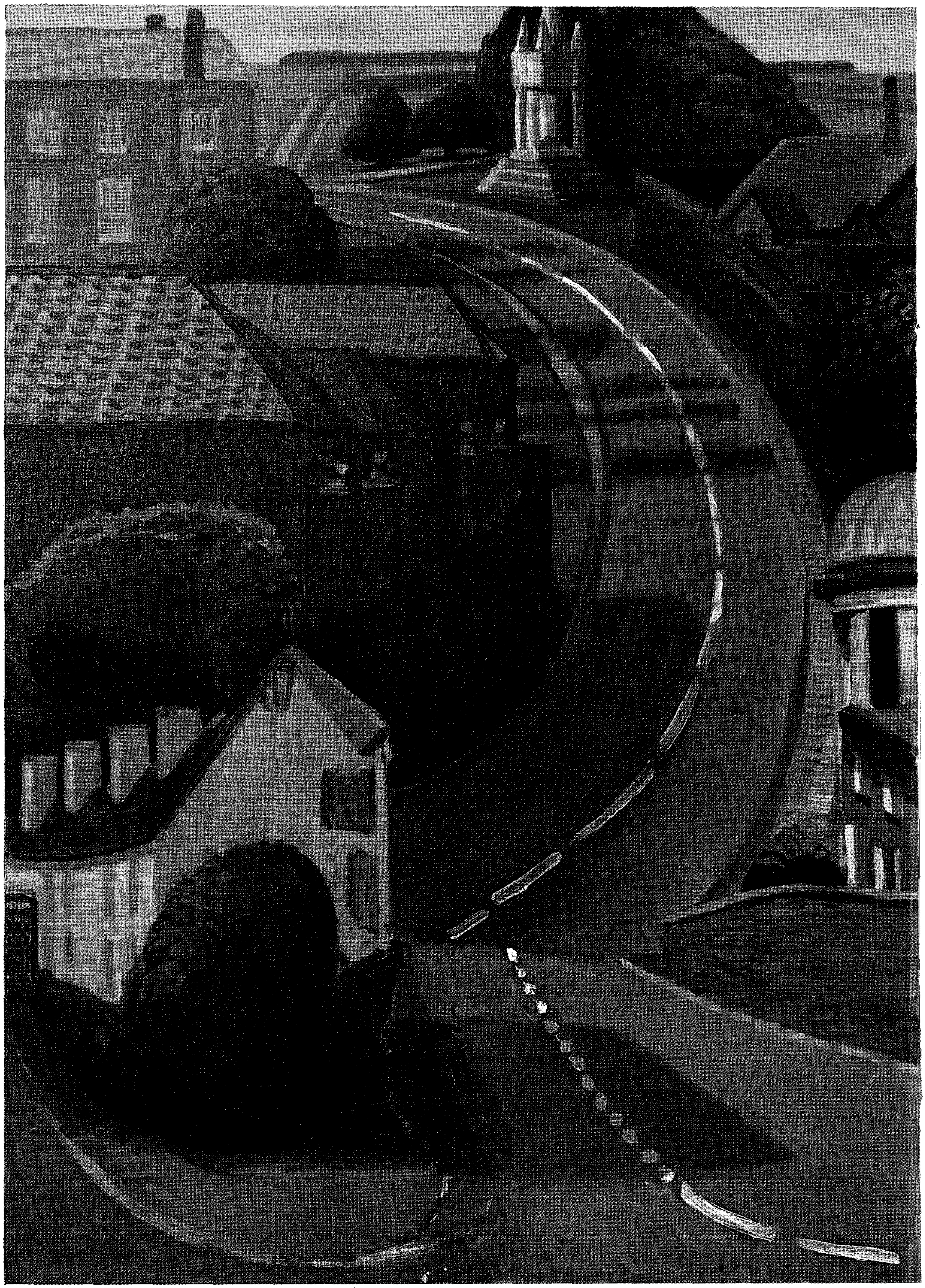
AT THE GALLERIES

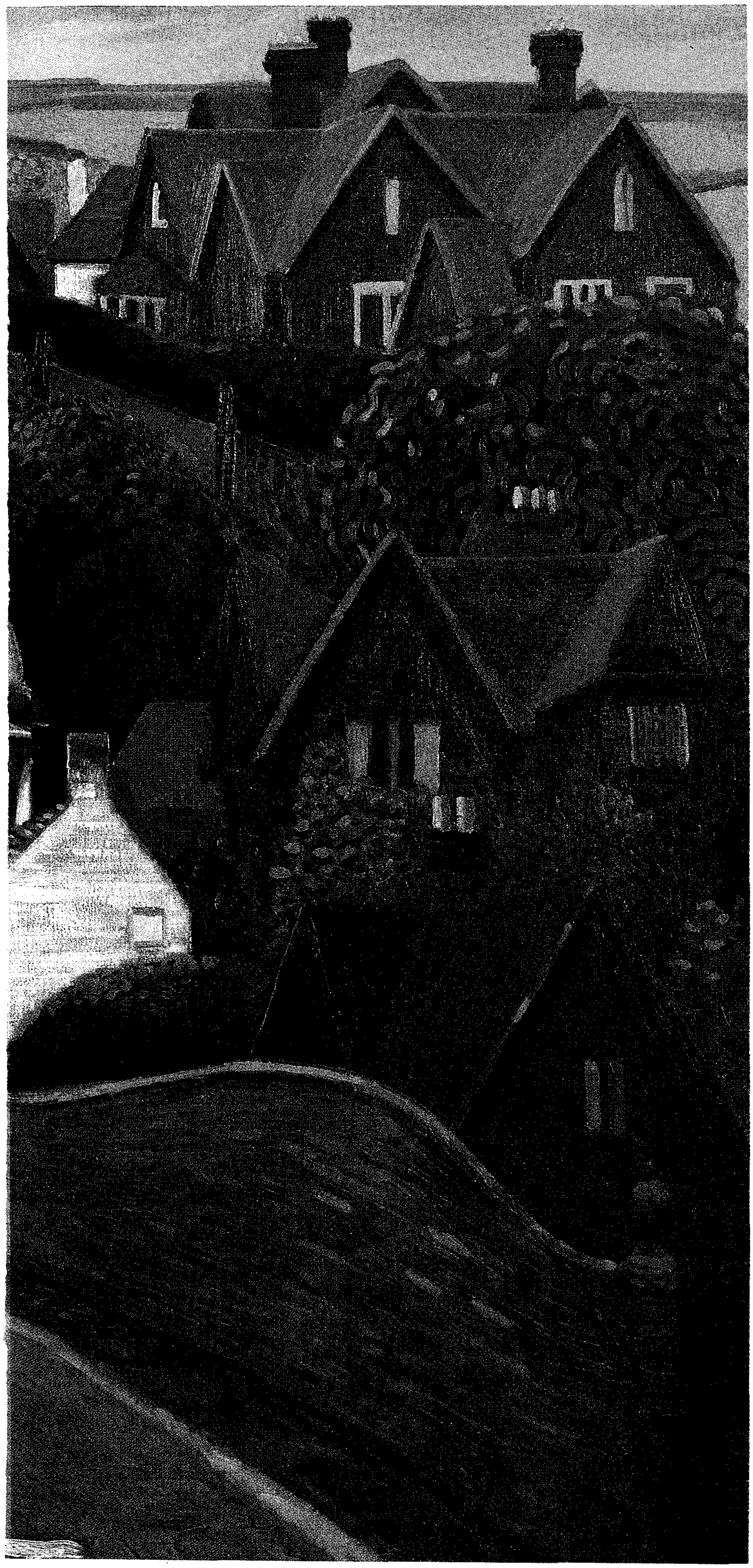
MOVING PICTURES

Six of the most exuberant paintings David Hockney has ever created are currently on view in a former textile mill in Saltaire, Yorkshire, which lies about three miles from the town of Bradford, where the artist was born and raised. They are there because of Hockney's friendship with another Yorkshireman, Jonathan Silver, who died of cancer last September. Silver studied art history in college, and, after a moderately successful merchandising career in the North of England, he came back to his roots in 1987 when he bought Salts Mill, Saltaire's vast, derelict textile factory (it was built in 1853), and began converting it into an arts center. "Jonathan originally made it a gallery by putting in some lithographs of mine," Hockney told me last week. "I saw that he was bringing the place back to life, so I gave him some early paintings I'd done when I was at the Bradford School of Art."

Hockney himself returns to Bradford four times a year, to visit his mother and other family members, and he loved what Silver was doing to revitalize the area. "Slowly Saltaire came back to being a lively centre," he wrote in an article in the current issue of *Modern Painters*, "all from the strength, the vision and the generous spirit of one man... He was a kind of operatic character. He created his own world and lived in it and shared it with a lot of people... How he financed it I have no idea." When Silver died, at the age of forty-seven, Hockney arranged to show a group of his recent paintings—all of them Yorkshire landscapes—at the 1853 Gallery in Salts Mill as a memorial to his friend.

Silver had often told Hockney that he should paint the landscape of Yorkshire. Although the artist's early fame was based on his use of the human figure—a radical subject in the early nineteen-sixties—landscape painting had become increasingly prominent in his work since 1980, the year he summed up his longtime residence in Los Angeles with a twenty-foot-long painting called "Mulholland Drive: The Road to the Studio." Thomas Moran's nineteenth-century landscapes gave him the idea of doing some big landscapes of the American West, an idea that was reinforced re-





cently when he drove from Los Angeles to Santa Fe for the first time and experienced "twelve hours of intense visual pleasure." Soon afterward, while staying with his sister on the Yorkshire coast, it struck him that Yorkshire, where you can see for very long distances, was not unlike the American West. "I realized I wanted to paint the landscape I'd known since my childhood," he said, "but in a new way, different from all those watercolors."

What makes Hockney's landscapes unlike those of Moran (or anyone else, for that matter) is their constantly shifting perspective. Take "The Road Across the Wolds" (*pages 62-63*). "If you look at this painting with some care," Hockney points out, "it's not what you think. There's a house at the lower right, which you see head-on, but everything else you look at is also head-on. It's not a space anyone could photograph. The space is utterly impossible, but it's possible through time—you are moving through time, driving in an open car." The same mobile perspective is at work in "The Road to York Through Sledmere," at the left. Here the viewer is in the driver's seat, dipping and winding through the village center and then accelerating up the hill past the stationary red brick houses.

Several much larger landscape paintings have been included in a travelling retrospective of Hockney's photographs which is now at the Ludwig Museum, in Cologne. "I've figured out what's wrong with photography," Hockney announced to me twenty-five years ago, when we were seated next to each other at a dinner party in Santa Monica. "It's a one-eyed man looking through a little 'ole—now, how much reality can there be in that?" Hockney's quarrel with photography led to the photographic collages he did in the nineteen-eighties, in which dozens or, sometimes, hundreds of still photographs of the same subject, each taken from a slightly different angle of vision, are glued down to form a kaleidoscopic image that eliminates the fixed and confining "window" of the one-eyed camera lens. There is a clear relationship between these collage-photographs, Hockney's landscape paintings, and his stage designs for the theatre and the opera. What they all have in common is this irrepressibly friendly artist's continuing effort to situate the viewer inside the picture, rather than on the outside looking in.

—CALVIN TOMKINS

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FICTION

THE TELEPHONE GAME

What was happening in that silent room at the other end of the line?

BY WILLIAM TREVOR

SINCE the conventional separation of the sexes on the evening before a wedding did not appeal to Liese, Tony agreed that there should be a party to which both sides of the wedding came instead. A party was necessary because the formalities of the day would not allow for much of a reunion with friends they had not seen for some time, but they did not wish the reception to be an occasion that went on and on: they wanted to be in Venice in time for the first dinner of their marriage. So in Tony's flat, already rearranged for married life, his friends and Liese's mixed jollily in advance, while wine flowed generously and there was background music that was danced to, while tomorrow's bride and groom learned a little more about one another from what was said; friendships here were longer than their own.

Tonight, there was a solemnity about Liese's manner which softened further the beauty of her features: her mind was on her marriage. Smooth, pale as wheat, her hair fell to her shoulders; her light-blue eyes were a degree less tranquil than usually they were, but when she smiled all that tranquillity came back. "Oh Tony, you are lucky," a cousin who had not met Liese before remarked, and Tony said he knew it. He was fair-haired, too, by nature insouciant and humorous, handsome in his way.

In Germany, Liese's father was a manufacturer of gloves. In England, Tony had been looked after by an aunt ever since his parents died in the worst air disaster of 1977—the runway collision of two jumbo jets—when Tony was six, an only child. Nineteen years later he and Liese had met by chance, in a bustling lunchtime restaurant, not far from Victoria Station. "D'you think we could see each other again?" he had pleaded, while a tubby, middle-aged waitress, bringing their coffee in that moment, approved of his boldness and let it show. 00178 was the number on the back of the driver's seat in the first taxi they sat in together, black digits on an oval of white enamel. Afterward, romantically, they both remembered that, and the taxi-driver's conversation and the tubby waitress.

Already in love, Liese was told about the tragedy in 1977, Tony about the gloves that had been the source of livelihood in Liese's family for generations. Driven by love, Tony played the part required of him in Schelesnau, asking questions about lambskin and pigskin and doeskin, showing an interest in hand-stitching and dyeing skills and thonging. Liese was nervous in anticipation before meeting Tony's aunt, who was getting on a bit now, in a small South Coast resort with a distant view of the ferries plying back and forth to France. But Liese needn't have been apprehensive. "She's lovely," Tony's aunt said, while in Schelesnau—where there were Liese's two younger sisters and a busy family life—Tony was considered charming. In Schelesnau and in England there was at first a faint concern that the marriage was taking on a burden that marriage did not always have to, that would have been avoided if Liese had chosen to marry a German or Tony an English girl: after all, there had been enmity in two terrible wars. It was a vague feeling, very much at odds with the sentiments of the time, and although it hovered like some old, long-discredited ghost, it failed in the end to gain a place in the scheme of things. What did, instead, was the telephone game.

On the night before the wedding it was Tony who suggested playing it. Afterward, he hardly knew why he did, why he had imagined that Germans would understand the humor of the game, but of course he'd had a certain amount to drink. For her part, Liese wished she had insisted that her wedding party wasn't an occasion for this kind of diversion. "Oh, Tony!" was her single, halfhearted protest, and Tony didn't hear it.

Already he had explained to Liese's sisters—both of whom were to be bridesmaids—that strangers were telephoned, that you won if you held a stranger in conversation longer than anyone else could with their random calls. The information was passed around among the bewildered Germans, who politely wondered what was coming next.

"I am in engine boats," a man who had been a classmate of Liese's in Fräulein Groenewold's kindergarten was saying when the music was turned off. "'Outboards,' you say?"

He, and all the others—more than thirty were still left at the party—were asked to be silent then. A number was dialled by Tony's best man and the first of the strangers informed that there was a gas leak in the street, asked to check the rooms of his house for a telltale smell, then to return to the phone with information as to that. The next was told that an external fuse had blown, that all electrical connections should be unplugged or turned off to obviate danger. The next was advised to close and lock his windows against a roving polecat.

"The Water Board here," Tony said when his turn came. "We're extremely sorry to call you out so late. We have an emergency."

Some of the German visitors were still perplexed. "So they are all your friends?" a girl with a plait asked, in spite of what had been said. "This is a joke with friends?"

Liese explained again that the people who were telephoned were just anyone. She whispered, in case her voice should carry to Tony's victim. "*Was? Stimmt irgendwas nicht?*" her friend whispered back, and Liese said it was all just for fun.

"What we would like you to do," Tony said, "is to make your way to the water tanks in your loft and turn off the inlet tap. This tap is usually red, Madam, but of course the color may have

ANDERS WENNGREN

worn off. What we're endeavoring to do is to prevent the flooding of your house."

"Flooding?" the woman he spoke to repeated, her voice drowsy with sleep. "Eh?"

"One of our transformer valves has failed. Dangerously high pressure level."

"I can't go up into the lofts at this hour" came the voice again. "It's the middle of the night."

"We're having to ask everyone in the area, Madam. Perhaps your husband—"

"I ain't got no husband. I ain't got no one here. I'm seventy-three years of age. How d'you think I'd know about a tap?"

"We're sorry for the inconvenience, Madam. We naturally would not ask you to do this if it were not necessary. When a transformer valve goes it is a vital matter. The main articulated valve may go next and then of course it is too late. When the articulated valve goes the floodwater could rise to sixteen feet within minutes. In which case I would advise you to keep to the upstairs rooms."

Tony put the palm of his hand over the mouthpiece. She had beetled off to get a stepladder, he whispered, and a flashlight. He listened again and said there was the mewing of a cat.

"It'll be all right now?" another German girl leaned forward to ask Liese, and the German who was in outboard motors, who perfectly understood the game, gestured with a smile that it would be. The game was amusing, he considered, but not a game to play in Schelesnau. It was sophisticated. It was the famous English sense of humor.

Tony heard the shuffle of footsteps, a door closing in the distance, and in the distance also the mewing of the cat again. Then there was silence.

Tony looked round his guests, some of them, as he was, a little drunk. He laughed, careless now of allowing the sound to pass to the other house, since its lone occupant was presumably already in her loft. He put the receiver down beside the directories on the narrow telephone table, and reached out with a bottle of Sancerre to attend to a couple of empty glasses. A friend he'd been at school with began to tell of a time when a man in Hoxton was sent out onto the streets to see if a stolen blue van had just been parked there. Some of the Germans said they must be going now.

"Sh-h-h." Listening again, Tony held up a hand. But there was no sound from the other end. "She's still aloft," he said, and put the receiver down beside the directories again.

"In Germany," it was explained by the man in outboard motors, "we might say this was *Ärgernis*."

"Oh, here, too," an English girl who did not approve of the telephone game said. "If that means 'harassment.' "

Those who remained left in a bunch at last, the Germans telling about *Wasservexierungsport*, a practical joke involving jets of water. You put your ten pfennigs into a slot machine to bring the lights on in a grotto and found yourself drenched instead. "Water-vexing," the outboard-motors man translated.

"YOU could stay here, you know," Tony said when he and Liese had collected the glasses and the ashtrays, when everything had been washed and dried, the cushions plumped up, a window opened to let in a stream of cold night air.

"But I have yet to finish packing up my things. The morning will be busy."

They walked about the flat that soon would be their home, going from room to room, although they knew the rooms well. Softly, the music still played, and they danced a little in the small hall, happy to be alone now. The day they'd met there had been an office party in the busy lunchtime restaurant, a lot of noise, and a woman in a red-dotted dress quarrelling with her friend at the table next to theirs. How cautious Liese had been that day was afterward remembered, and how cautious she'd been much later when Tony said he loved her. Remembered, too, with that same fondness was how both of them had wanted marriage, not some substitute, how they had wanted the binding of its demands and vows and rigors. London was the city of their romance and it was in London—to the discomfort and annoyance of her parents, defying all convention—that Liese had insisted the marriage should take place.

While they danced, Tony noticed that his telephone receiver was still lying beside the directories. Half an hour ago he had forgotten about it. He reached to pick it up, bringing their dance to an end.

"She hasn't put hers back," he said.

Liese took the receiver from him. She listened, too, and heard the empty sound of a connected line. "Hullo," she said. "Hullo."

"She forgot. She went to bed."

"Would she forget, Tony?"

"Well, something like it."

"Did she give a name? You have the number still?"

Tony shook his head. "She didn't give a name." He had forgotten the number; he'd simply made it up as he dialled, he said.

"What did she say, Tony?"

"Only that she was without a husband."

"Her husband was out? At this time?"

They had drawn away from one another. Tony turned the music off.

"She meant she was widowed," he said. "She wasn't young. Seventy, or something like that."

"This old woman goes to her loft—"

"Well, I mean, she said she would. More likely, she didn't believe a word I said."

"She went to look for a stepladder and a flashlight. You told us."

"I think she said she was cold in her nightdress. More likely, she just went back to bed. I don't blame her."

Listening again, Liese said, "I can hear the cat."

But when she passed the receiver over, Tony said he couldn't hear anything. Nothing at all, he said.

"Very far away. The cat was mewing, and suddenly it stopped. Don't put it back!" Liese cried when Tony was about to return the receiver to its cradle. "She is there in her loft, Tony."

"Oh, honestly, I don't think so. Why should she be? It doesn't take an hour and a quarter to turn a stopcock off."

"What is a stopcock?"

"Just a way of controlling the water."

The mewing of the cat came faintly to him, a single mew and then another. Not knowing why he did so, Tony shook his head again, silently denying this sound.

"She could have fallen down," Liese said. "It would be hard to see with her flashlight and she could have fallen down."

"No, I don't think so."

For the first time in the year and a half she had known him Liese heard a testiness in Tony's voice. There was no point in not replacing the receiver, he said. "Look, let's forget it, Liese."

Solemnly, but in distress, Liese gazed into the features of the man she was to marry in just over twelve hours' time. He smiled a familiar, easy smile. No point, he said again, more softly. No point in going on about this.

"Honestly, Liese."

They had walked about, that first afternoon. He had taken her through Green

Park, then down to the river. She was in London to perfect her English; that afternoon she should have been at another class. And it was a quarter past five before Tony explained, untruthfully, his absence from his desk. The next day they met again.

"Nothing has happened, Liese."

"She could be dead."

"Oh, Liese, don't be silly."

At once, having said that, Tony apologized. Of course she wasn't silly. That game was silly. He was sorry they'd played it tonight.

"But, Tony—"

"Of course she isn't dead."

"Why do you think you can be sure?"

He shook his head, meaning to indicate that he wasn't claiming to be sure, only that reason implied what he suggested. During the months they were getting to know one another he had learned that Liese's imagination was sometimes a nuisance; she had said so herself. Purposeless and dispensable, she said—a quirk of nature that caused her, too often, to doubt the surface of things. Well, you could call music purposeless, he had replied, the petal of a flower dispensable: what failed the marketplace was often what should be treasured most. But Liese called her quirk of nature a pest; and experiencing an instance of it for the first time now, Tony understood.

"Let's not quarrel, Liese."

But the quarrel—begun already while neither noticed—spread, insidious in the stillness that the silent telephone, once more passed from hand to hand, seemed to inspire. Neither heard the mewing of the cat again, and Tony said, "Look, in the morning she'll see that receiver hanging there and she'll remember she forgot to put it back."

"It is morning now. Tony, we could go to the police."

"The *police*? What on earth for?"

"They could find out where that house is."

"Oh, none of this makes sense!" And Tony, who happened just then to be holding the telephone receiver, would again have replaced it.

Liese snatched it, anger flushing through her cheeks. She asked him why he'd wanted to do that, and he shrugged and didn't answer. He didn't because all this was ridiculous, because he didn't trust himself to say anything.

"The police couldn't find out," he said after a silence had gone on. The police wouldn't have a telephone number to go on. All they could tell the police was that in a house somewhere in London there was an old woman and a cat. All over London, Tony said, there were old women and cats.

"Tony, try to remember the number."

"Oh, for God's sake! How can I remember the bloody number when I didn't even know it in the first place?"

"Well, then it will be in the computers."

"What computers?"

"In Germany all calls go into the computers."

"Look, we can't just walk round to a police station at nearly three o'clock in the morning to report that an old woman has gone up to her loft. It was a harmless game, Liese."

She tried to say nothing, but did not succeed. The words came anyway, unchosen, ignoring her will.

"It is a horrible game. How can it not be horrible when it ends like this?"

The old woman lies there, Liese heard her own voice insist. And light comes up through the open trapdoor, and the stepladder is below. There are the dusty boards, the water pipes. The cat's eyes are pinpricks in the gloom.

"Has she struck her head, Tony? And bones go brittle when you're old. I'm saying what could be true."

"We have no reason whatsoever to believe any of this has happened."

"The telephone left hanging—"

"She did not replace the telephone because she forgot to."

"You asked her to come back. You said to do what you asked and to tell you if it was done."

"Sometimes people can tell immediately that it's a put-up thing."

"Hullo! Hullo!" Liese agitatedly shouted into the receiver. "Hullo . . . Please."

"Liese, we have to wait until she wakes up again."

"At least the cat will keep the mice away."

Other people will see the lights left on. Other people will come to the house and find the dangling telephone. Why should an old woman in her nightclothes set a stepladder under a trapdoor? The people who come will ask that. They'll give the cat a plate of milk and then they'll put the telephone back, and one of them will climb up the ladder.

"I wish it had happened some other night."

"Liese—"

"You wanted to put the receiver back. You wanted not to know. You wanted us forever not to know, to make a darkness of it."

"No, of course I didn't."

"Sometimes a person doesn't realize. A person acts in some way and doesn't realize."

"Please," Tony begged again and Liese felt his arms around her. Tears for a moment smudged away the room they were in, softly he stroked her hair. When she could speak she whispered through his murmured consolation, repeating that she wished all this had happened sooner, not tonight. As though some illness had struck her, she experienced a throbbing ache, somewhere in her body, she didn't know where. That came from muddle and confusion was what she thought, or else from being torn apart, as if she possessed two selves. There was not room for quarrels between them. There had not been, there was not still. Why had it happened tonight, why now? Imagining was Gothic castles and the fairy tales she made up when she was in Fräulein Groenewold's kindergarten, and fantasies with favorite film stars later on. It became a silliness when reality was distorted. Of course he was right.

"I can't help thinking of her," Liese whispered nonetheless. "I cannot help it."

Tony turned away, and slowly crossed to the window. He wanted to be outside, to walk about the streets, to have a chance to think. He had been asked to reason with Liese when she wanted her wedding to be in London. A longish letter had come from Schelesnau, pleading with him to intervene, to make her see sense. It was inconvenient for everyone; it was an added and unnecessary expense; it was *exzentrisch* of her.

Tonight Liese had learned that Tony had been daring as a boy, that he had walked along a ledge from one dormitory window to another, eighteen feet above the ground. She had delighted in that—that he had not told her himself, that he was courageous and did not boast of it. Yet everything seemed different now.

"It is a feeling," Liese said.

At the window, Tony stared down into the empty street. The artificial light had not yet been extinguished and would not be for hours. Yet dawn had already crept in, among the parked cars, the plastic sacks brought up from basements the night before, bicycles chained to railings. What did she mean, a feeling?

"Honestly, there is no reason to be upset."

As he spoke, Tony turned from the window. Liese's face was tight and nervous now, for a moment not beautiful. The air that came into the room was refreshingly cold, and again he wanted to be walking in it, alone somewhere. She did not love him was what she meant, she had been taken from him. He said so, staring down into the street again, his back to her.

"Oh no, I love you, Tony."

All over London, sleeping now, were tomorrow's wedding guests—her mother and her father, her friends come all the way from Schelesnau. Her sisters' bridesmaids' dresses were laid out. Flowers had been ordered, and a beribboned car. The grass of the hotel lawns was trimmed for the reception. In her house by the sea Tony's aunt had ironed the clothes she'd chosen, and Liese imagined them waiting on their hangers. The morning flights would bring more guests from Germany. She had been stubborn about the city of their romance. There would have been no old woman's sleep disturbed in Schelesnau, no ugly unintended incident. Why did she know that the dead were carried from a house in a plain long box, not a coffin?

"We are different kinds of people, Tony."

"Because you are German and I am English? Is that it? That history means something after all?"

She shook her head. Why did he think that? Why did he seize such a useful cliché?

"We are not enemies, we are friends." She said a little more, trying to explain what did not seem to her to be complicated. Yet she felt she made it so, for the response was bewilderment. And Tony said, "Remember that office party? The quarrelling woman in red? The waitress smiling when we went off together? 00178. Remember that?"

She tried to, but the images would not come as clearly as they usually did. "Yes, I remember," she said.

The doubt in their exchanges brought hesitation, was an inflection that could not be disguised. Silences came, chasms that each time were wider.

"This has to do with us, not with the past we did not know." Liese shook her head, firm in her emphasis.

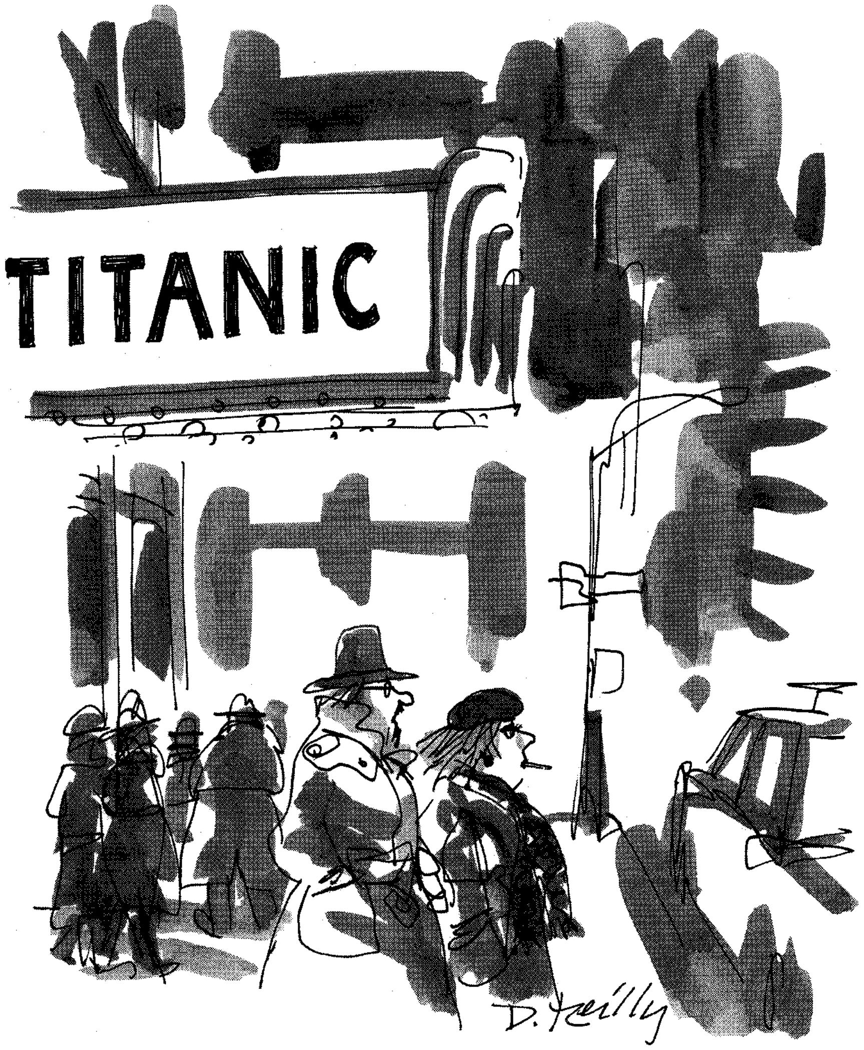
Tony nodded and, saying nothing, felt the weight of patience. He wondered about it in a silence that went on for minutes, before there was the far-off rattle of a human voice, faint and small. He looked from the window to where Liese had laid the receiver on the table. He watched her move to pick it up, and saw, an instant later, the glow of relief spreading in her face.

THE wedding guests strolled on tidy hotel lawns. A photographer fussed beneath a bright blue sky. "You are more beautiful than I ever knew," Tony whispered while more champagne was drunk and there was talk in German and in English. "And I love you more."

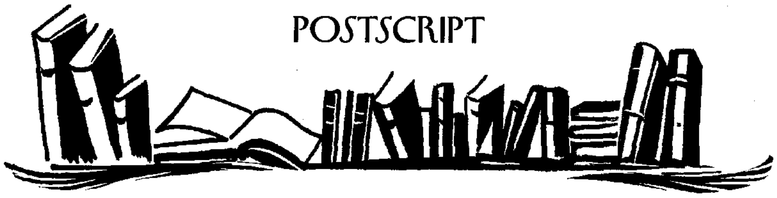
Liese smiled in the moment they had purloined, before another speech was called for, before her father expressed his particular joy that the union of two families brought with it today the union of two nations. "We are two foolish people," Tony had said when at last the telephone receiver was replaced, after the journey to the loft had been retailed in detail, an apology offered because carrying out the instructions had taken so long. They had embraced, clinging to one another tightly, gratefully delivered from their territory of unease. And the shadow of truth that had come was lost in the euphoria.

"I'm sorry," Liese said in the next day's sunshine. "I'm sorry I was a nuisance."

Glasses were raised to greater happiness than the happiness of the day. Together they smiled and waved from the car when it came to take them away. Then private at last, they let their tiredness show, each reaching for a hand. Their thoughts were different. He had been right. Yet again, for Tony, that conclusion repeated itself: not once in the night had he doubted that he'd been right. And Liese wondered why it was that passing incidents seemed more significant in people's lives and their relationships than the enmity or amity of nations. For a moment she wanted to speak of that, and almost did before deciding not to. ♦



"Women and children first. I mean, come on."



POSTSCRIPT

CITIZEN GILL

Remembering the quintessential New Yorker.

BRENDAN GILL, who died on December 27th, at the age of eighty-three, was one of the few writers whose speaking voice and writing voice were entirely one: if you knew his sentences, you knew the man, and either way he was irresistible. He invented a tone so full of happiness that it seemed to expand naturally, crossing borders and overflowing boundaries. He joined the magazine in 1936, and over the years he contributed to its pages as short-story writer, master book reviewer, Profiler, movie critic, theatre critic, and, for the last ten years, architecture critic in the column Sky Line. Not the least of his accomplishments was his selfless work, undertaken over many years, as the supreme anonymous rewrite man for The Talk of the Town. (He thought that there was something important about a place where men and women as talented as he devoted themselves to unglamorous literary tasks.) He wrote some twenty books, including lives of Tallulah Bankhead and Charles Lindbergh, and sharp, nostalgic appreciations of Cole Porter and summer places—books bound together, perhaps, by his love of American glamour and American frailty. His heart, though, belonged in his fiction, to which he had returned in the last years of his life, and many readers still relish the intricate, stylish honesty of his two novels—"The Trouble of One House" and "The Day the Money Stopped." Of all his work, it may be his best-selling history of the magazine, "Here at The New Yorker," and his collection of short stories, "Ways of Loving," that live the longest.

It was his tone that held it all together, and that Gill tone, in life as well as on the page, seemed to have been made in the confident city of the forties and fifties: droll and quick and uncompromised, always up on its toes and one step ahead of the reader—quick-footed, and at its best in sprints and hurdles. His style was more complex than its ease allowed it to look, being composed of an oratorical set of flourishes and furbelows (he was a writer who had the confidence to begin a sentence with "Surely") set off by an ironic, winking, almost coquettish knowledge of its own rhetoric. This spirited crossover manner gave his writing a high-hearted, roller-coaster exuberance. The word that most frequently came to mind about him was "urbane," with the understanding that he had returned "urbane" to its root meaning: he was a man in love with a city. New York, as much as *The New Yorker*, will be reduced by his absence.

—ADAM GOPNIK

•

Brendan was the life of any party he attended, and where a party wasn't in progress he would create one. When I came to work for *The New Yorker*, in the mid-nineteen-fifties, he loomed as the only gregarious man on the premises—the only one whose creativity hadn't demanded a sublimation of his social instincts. Irresistibly, he would lead me off to the Blue Ribbon or to some other long since vanished restaurant in the West Forties, and there, in company with others, whom he had flushed from their dusty nooks in the shy, shabby halls of the magazine, I would be enrolled in a midday feast of good will, a chamber music of drollery dominated by Brendan's rasping, cajoling, bantering voice. Though a Hartford upbringing and a Yale education had left no trace of an Irish accent, his utterances had an Irish deliciousness, a pleasure in the speaking that prolonged the key phrases. As he aged, and his slender back became stooped and his noble nose even more beaked, he would strike into, as a kind of audible italics, an old crone's quaver. His animation was contagious: you felt cleverer, talking to Brendan.

His joie de vivre may have put into the shadow his dedication to the life of the intellect and of art. In "Here at The New Yorker"—whose breeziness and irreverence were not entirely appreciated in these breezy, irreverent precincts—he describes how his first stories were submitted and accepted in 1936:

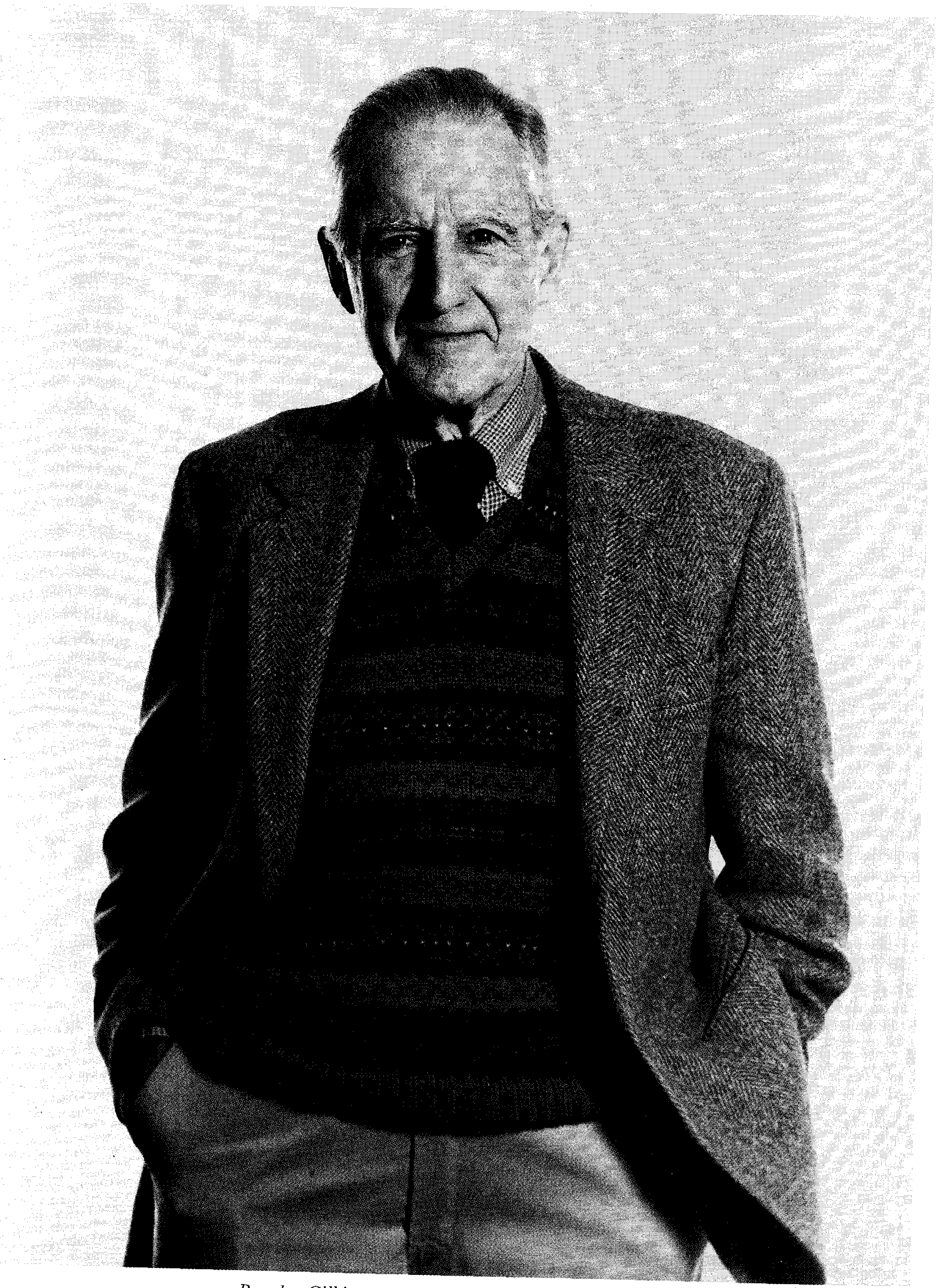
> It became evident that the editors of *The New Yorker* knew little about Catholics and especially about Catholics in religious orders, and that they were eager to read about them, as occupying a hitherto largely unexplored field of human conduct; this was lucky for me, because although I knew almost as little about nuns and priests as they did, I was feverishly eager to oblige them and was therefore ready to make up anything that I didn't know or was unable to discover.

Anyone who reads some of those early stories by Brendan—for example, "The Knife," a desolating sketch of faith's clash with reality—will see that he is, characteristically, making light of their subjects. If he didn't take his own artistic gifts quite seriously enough, he was avidly alert to the power of art in general—of the architectural treasures largely unnoticed around him, of the Yeats poetry he quoted so readily, of paintings and writings well beyond the predictable range. He composed one of the few thoughtful appreciations of pornographic films—they made him happy, he wrote—and was a book reviewer of real ardor and verve. I am haunted still by several of the architectural metaphors he applied to books. Of Faulkner's "A Fable" he said that it wasn't even the ruin of a good book, it was a papier-mâché ruin, and he likened John O'Hara's large novels to giant ancient earthworks that one walks over without ever discerning their purpose. He more than once troubled to send a young fiction writer an encouraging note, in lucid, slightly florid handwriting that suggested an eighteenth-century style. Indeed, his was an Enlightenment personality, exhilarated by the possibilities of liberation; like Voltaire, he mocked in defense of life.

—JOHN UPDIKE

•

My first view of Brendan, in 1939, was angular. On my first day at *The New Yorker*, St. Clair McKelway, then the managing editor, escorted me to my office, a narrow chamber that would have been comfortable quarters for a good-natured mastiff. "A bit crowded here," mumbled McKelway (a truly great editor, but he mumbled). "Your roommates are David Lardner, youngest son of Ring, and Brendan Gill, a Yale man. They're out now, but Gill's desk is by the window, and Dave's is here by the door." Moments later, a gap-toothed man whose hair stood straight up burst into the room. "I'm Ross," he said. "Welcome and God bless." And he was gone. I am in a strange



Brendan Gill in 1988, photographed by Sara Barrett.

and wonderful world, I told myself as the door opened again and a tall, lithe, jet-black-haired young man vaulted over my desk with the grace of a gazelle and landed in a chair by the window. "Brendan Gill," he said, extending a hand. Thus began a close and treasured friendship that survived some six decades. Somewhere along the line we began calling each other Uncle Phil and Uncle Brendan. To me, he was always avuncular: almost careless in his sharing of time and help to those less gifted. That was a problem with Brendan: he was blessed with an overabundance of talent. He was a brilliant writer, critic, and social historian, but he was also a devoted parent to a vast and adoring family; a social being of charm and wit, who felt that missing a party was a mortal sin; and a citizen in the true sense of the word—a protector of the city he loved. Often, I had the ridiculous notion that Brendan—a Prospero in the lives of those who knew him—would beat the odds, and go on for two hundred, perhaps three hundred years. When I last talked to him, a week or so ago, he ended, as he so often did, with the words "Carry on."

—PHILIP HAMBURGER

•

Eyelashes, thick, straight black ones; dark eyes glancing down at Vermouth, then darting around the room; gray-white hair all combed back; a gray-and-black tweed jacket and khaki trousers; a small handful of salty nuts; a wry exchange with fellow-members of the Century Association who come over to his table; a nod to the portrait of Henry James on the wall, a small lecture about Henry James. If one pays close attention, he's a little devilish in descriptions of colleagues, despite the way he arranges his enviable, remarkably pretty sentences. He says he's hopping about town nightly because "I have no inner resources," which is a lie. It's possible to stay all evening and hear about his glorious childhood in Hartford, Yeats in old age, *The New Yorker* in the late forties—he's in a state of ecstasy now—when editors with proofs of a new Salinger story in their hands strolled down the corridors in a state of editorial euphoria that has since become extinct. He recites his favorite first paragraph—from "Tender Is the Night": "On the pleasant shore of the French Riviera, about half way between Marseilles and the Italian border . . ."—and is still dazzled, as if he were right there in Cap d'Antibes. He says, "I see myself as twenty-six." Maybe he is twenty-six. And then comes the abrupt exit: "I must leap to my feet." He does just that, and is off, with his long-legged walk and darting eyes, to Grand Central.

—ALISON ROSE

•

Brendan was to architecture and preservation what Robin Hood was to income distribution, which is to say he was the man who made it impossible for the upper classes not to give something to the cause. Would Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis have made the Municipal Art Society, and its campaigns to save Grand Central Terminal and other New York City landmarks, her favorite crusade in New York without Brendan?

Brendan may have acted like a dandy, but he thought with the mind of a critic. Rarely has such overwhelming enthusiasm been so uncompromised by sentimentality. If he took delight in socializing with the rich and powerful, he took still greater pleasure in deftly demolishing their rationales for building what he was determined should never get past the drawing board. Brendan was fooled by no one, least of all by architects. His writing about the risks of what he called Disneyitis, of too much cuteness in our architectural landscape, was all the more compelling because it came from so unexpected a source—in this case, a cry for gravity from a man noted for flippancy.

Brendan was entirely unswayed by the arguments that Times Square needed to be "cleaned up"; he liked it as it was, and fought from the beginning against the plans to put four enormous office towers around the square in the name of revitalization. He lost that battle, but he won most of his others: Grand Central, the Villard Houses, the founding of the Landmarks Conservancy. Each of these emerged out of his certainty—so simple, so essential—that we preserve beloved architecture not to take us back into the past but to give us a richer, more resonant present.

In 1990, Brendan wrote, "The city is a mystery, existing inside our heads as well as outside, as we who are students of cities may well spend our lives seeking in vain to elucidate that mystery. What draws us to its heart when common sense tells us that we should be running full tilt in the opposite direction?"

—PAUL GOLDBERGER

•

Brendan was the most professional and the most cheerful writer on earth: it was almost unbearable. Back in the sixties and early seventies, my twentieth-floor office at the old *New Yorker* quarters was two doors away from his, and no matter how early I turned up in the morning his light would be on and, most days, his typewriter going at full rattle. In no time, it always seemed, he would emerge, his task done, and scud past my corner with his beaky, friendly face alight, his hands full of galley proofs or fresh copy, and a couple of outbound letters clenched in his teeth while he struggled into his coat and somehow waved a greeting at the same time: off to meet someone or arrange something or simply attend to the city. After lunch, he was back, often in company and conversation with a visiting friend or interviewee—I can remember Brendan Behan coming by one day, and Max Ernst or Robert Graves on others, not to mention women of startling interest (who was *that*?)—and their talk and laughter from behind his door sounded livelier and more intense than anything going on with me just then. Other writers and editors took this same mild umbrage—sometimes we would exchange notes about our own low-level, underlit days compared to Brendan's dazzle—but it was hard to sustain, because he included everyone within his boundless and affable attention. "Yes!" he would cry in response to anything you offered, and you would feel the warming searchlight of his questions and ideas and anecdotes and afterthoughts fall upon you, and find yourself—for a minute, anyway—as cheerful and likable and riveting as he was, and almost as swift.

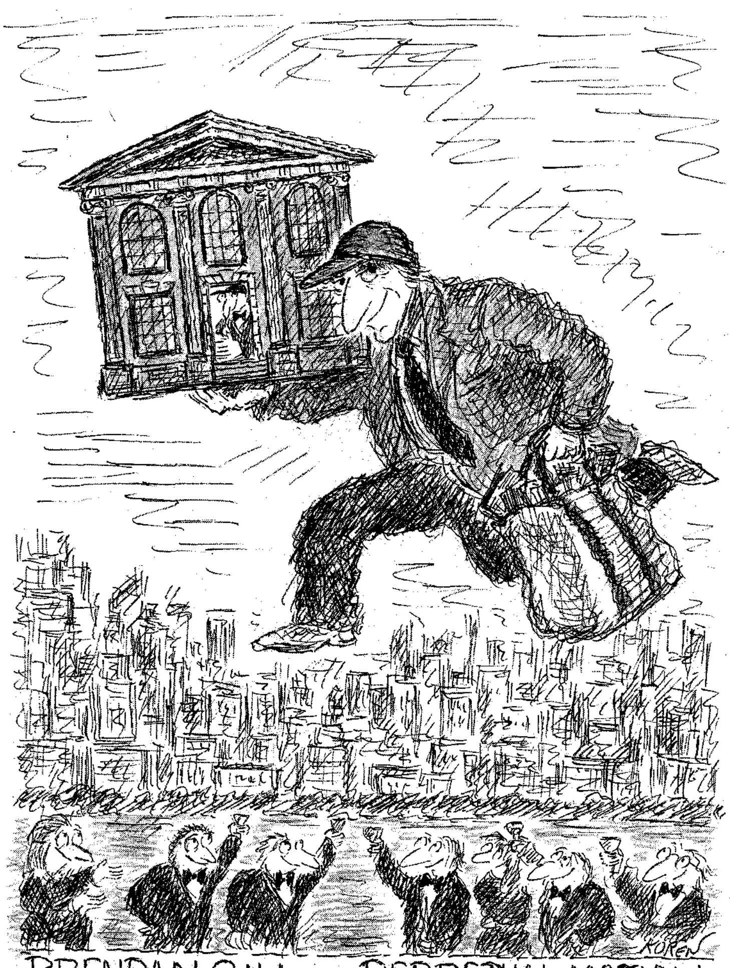
All writers understand the interlocked hearts of competition and affection, but none did so better than Gill. The simple truth, the unedged rejoinder, was not for him. Talking one day with our colleague William Maxwell, who had recently written a story that received a flood of acclaim, Brendan relayed some serious additional compliments he had heard at dinner parties and from friends of both of them, and then held up a warning finger. "One more success like this," he said fondly, "will be the end of our friendship."

—ROGER ANGELL

•

Brendan was pure quicksilver. He moved swiftly, effortlessly, in unexpected directions. He did everything at a tremendous rate. He walked at a run, he talked a mile a minute, and he wrote with the same dispatch. When he was doing drama criticism and had a deadline to meet, he would

think things over in the cab from the theatre, sit down at his old office upright (he could type like a demon, too), and turn out a perfectly formed, well-thought-out review with half an hour to spare. He could do this because his mind worked as fast as his legs and tongue and typewriter. He relished debate and argument, and would often unhorse his adversary with a statement of such dubious veracity and paralyzing irrelevance as to be unanswerable. "Are you aware," he once said to one victim, impaling him with a glare from each side of that great bugle of a nose, "that the Mentavo Indians of western Peru would regard what you have just said as a confession of your own sexual inadequacy?" He was acclaimed as a public speaker—Lord knows he spoke in public often enough—but some of us thought that he was even better to read than to hear. There was a lot going on in his writing, and it took time to extract it. Like quicksilver, he gleamed as he moved, and, like quicksilver, he had solid weight beneath that gleam.
—GARDNER BOTSFORD



BRENDAN GILL IN PERPETUAL MOTION

EDWARD KOREN

•

In "Here at The New Yorker," Brendan Gill wrote, "Not a shred of evidence exists in favor of the argument that life is serious, though it is often hard and even terrible. And saying that, I am prompted to add what follows out of it: that since everything ends badly for us, in the inescapable catastrophe of death, it seems obvious that the first rule of life is to have a good time." Brendan, even when he was at an age when many people's design for living has become merely a design for not dying, followed this rule to the letter. If you happened to be of the melancholic or ruminative persuasion, Brendan's cock's-crow energy and torrential exuberance were galling. Next to him your life couldn't help looking like something that hadn't had its morning coffee yet.

In the last few years, my world overlapped with part of Brendan's. He was on the nominating committee for the Tony Awards, and was expected to see every Broadway production. Night after night, I'd spot him in the theatre: he was the only man in the audience in a purple baseball cap. I'd seek him out during intermission, especially if the show was extremely good or extremely bad—that's when Brendan was most entertaining. He never ceased to marvel, in person or on the page. In fact, he used the word "marvellous" a lot, but not the way many people of a certain age and class do, as all-purpose conversational seasoning. Brendan frowned when he said it. He took his awe seriously. For two decades, he covered Broadway for *The New Yorker*, and his pieces ring with his distinctive writing voice, which was at once brisk and luxuriant: "Mr. Justice Holmes long ago formulated a rough eugenic rule of thumb to the effect that three generations of imbeciles were enough, and in something like the same fashion, one night of mind-numbing boredom is enough to inflict on any Broadway audience."

One evening a couple of months ago, I saw a duck walking around in Brendan's office (never mind what the duck was doing there), and I asked him if I could take a picture. It would never have occurred to him to say no to such a request, and the picture I now have of him, wearing a seersucker jacket and a jaunty straw hat and holding a duck, says as much as anything I can say about how appalling it is that he is no longer here to prove his point about the first rule of life. —NANCY FRANKLIN

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For all his blitheness of spirit, Brendan had the Irish sense of mortality. His own luck held in the suddenness of his death. In another victory, he managed, several years ago, to write his own obituary in *The New Yorker*, in a review of a biography of Philip Johnson. "Against high odds and at whatever cost in private anguish," Brendan wrote, "he has wrested a good time from the world—no mean prize. He has also succeeded in passing the only test that matters: he has given back to the world more than he has taken out of it."
—SUSAN SHEEHAN

•

His office at 20 West Forty-third Street was a curious place of odds and ends: a railroad clock on its side, part of an easel, a birdcage, a map of New York, a dinner jacket hanging on the back of the door, a book-covered couch, a picture of the house he grew up in, in Hartford, an ancient desk from which he pulled a photograph of himself at twenty-five. Everything had been moved over from the "old" building—from a corridor that Philip Hamburger had named Sleepy Hollow. It was not easy to imagine Brendan in a place called Sleepy Hollow. In his introduction to the new, 1997 edition of "Here at The New Yorker" he wrote, "I've never known what it is to be tired. I've never known what it was not to run everywhere. If I see a hedge, I feel convinced I'd better jump it, though someday on the far side I may find myself in a thousand pieces. I leap out of bed in the morning with the disposition that something perfectly wonderful is going to happen to me that day." —GEORGE PLIMPTON

MUSICAL EVENTS

PROSPERO'S SONGS

A season of Sibelius teaches us to take the Finnish composer seriously.

BY ALEX ROSS

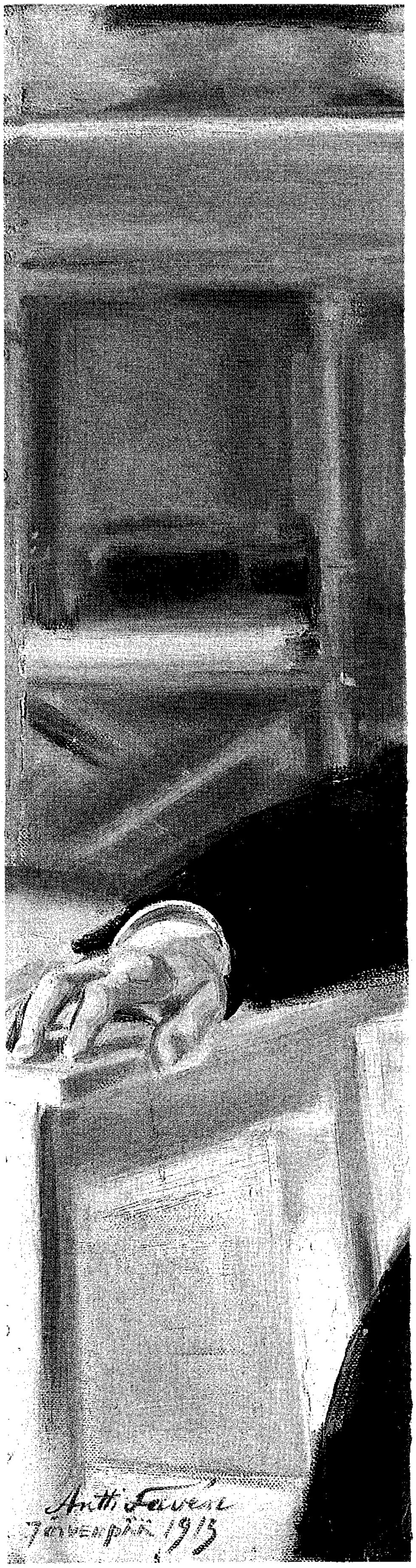
THIS is a romance about a man who fell silent, who walked away from the world. Artists like to tell such stories about themselves. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, in "The Letter of Lord Chandos," goes inside the mind of a writer who has decided to stop writing. "For me," Lord Chandos says, "everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts.... Single words floated round me; they congealed into eyes which stared at me and into which I was forced to stare back." Shakespeare, too, took up this subject—the renunciation of the creative self—in "The Tempest." At the end of the play, Prospero frees himself from his magic powers, and it is as though the aging Shakespeare were speaking through him:

> I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book.

In 1925, Jean Sibelius, who was then fifty-nine, wrote incidental music for a production of "The Tempest." When he reached Prospero's monologue, he responded to Shakespeare's direction for "Solemn music" with a sequence of slashing dissonances. The following year, he wrote the tone poem "Tapiola," a surreally turbulent depiction of Finland's forests. A couple of years later, he wrote several short, weird pieces for violin and piano. Then he stopped. Although he worked for some years on an Eighth Symphony, he eventually burned it in the fireplace of his isolated forest home. He died in 1957, at the age of ninety-one. His thirty-year silence is one of the great biographical mysteries in music. It is often treated as a tragedy—as the act of a self-abasing alcoholic. Yet it had about it a kind of dark grace: Sibelius finished at high pitch and left well enough alone. By stopping in midsentence, he gave the feeling that he might at any time resume. In a strange way, at the end of the century, he has.

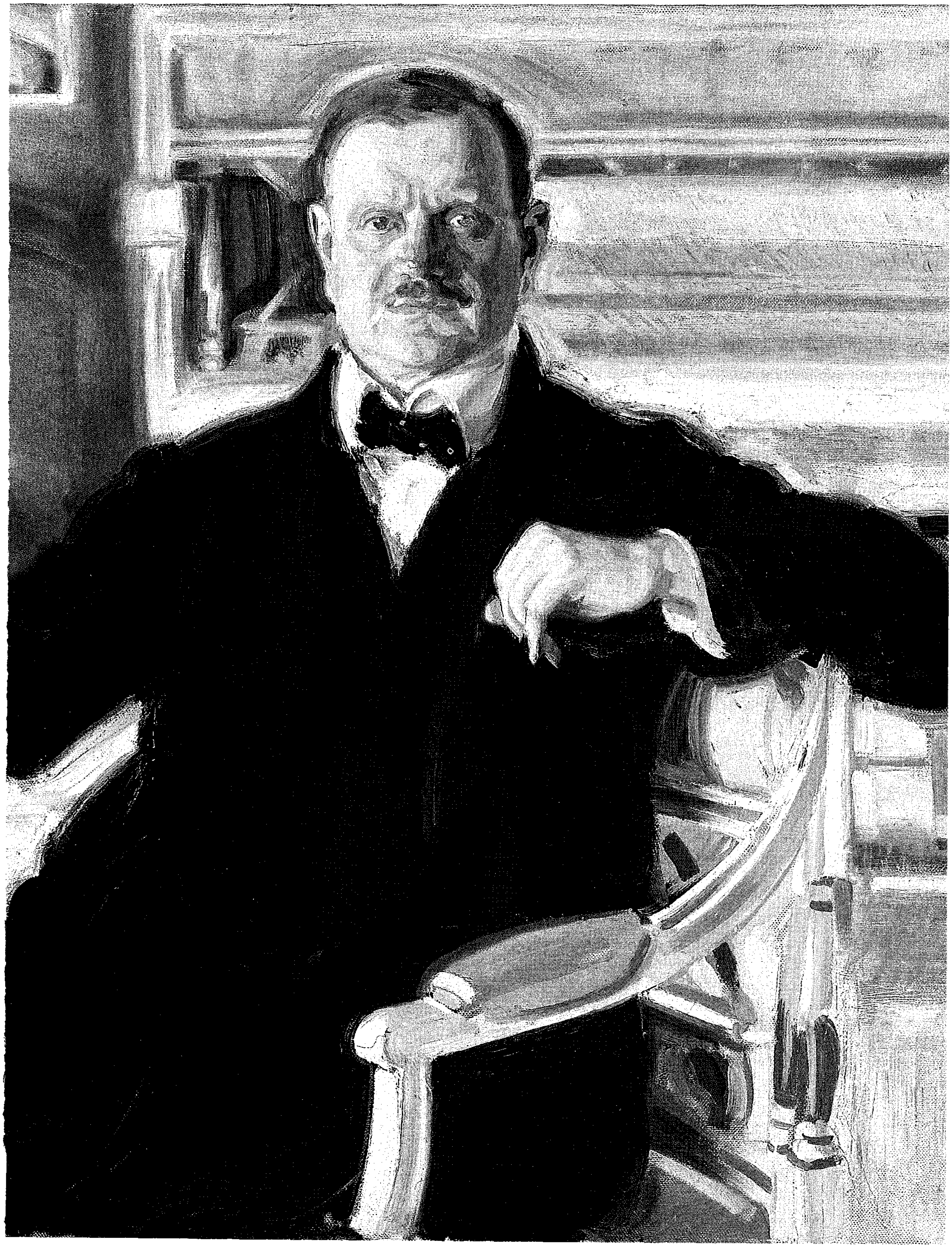
VARIOUS forces have conspired to make this a Sibelius season in New York. In December, Colin Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra presented five of Sibelius's seven symphonies in a festival called Northern Lights at Lincoln Center. Later this month, the Juilliard School will present a festival of Scandinavian music, in which Sibelius's influence is likely to be pervasive. In February, the Finnish conductor-teacher Jorma Panula will lead a weeklong workshop at Carnegie Hall, culminating in a performance of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony under the direction of one of Panula's former students, Esa-Pekka Salonen. And in March the Brooklyn Philharmonic will give a rare performance of Sibelius's early, neo-primitive choral symphony "Kullervo," alongside contemporary Finnish works. The Lincoln Center festival has already brought news about the state of the composer's reputation. Festivals of this kind tend to attract clusters of enthusiasts and leave empty seats elsewhere in the hall. For Sibelius, the hall was full, and the audience listened intently. The silence underneath the music spoke to the new respect that the composer has gained in recent years, after a long spell in purgatory.

It's not that Sibelius ever vanished from the concert hall. His most famous works—"Finlandia," the First and Second Symphonies, the Violin Concerto—have always been warhorses. They exemplify his early, high-heroic style: an extension of late Romanticism in which folk-inflected lyric lines surge over rhythmic bustle and Wagnerian harmonies. They are great theatre, if not great music. They created an American Sibelius craze in the first part of this century. Sibelius's identification with the nascent Finnish state made him a symbol of artistic activism, of an

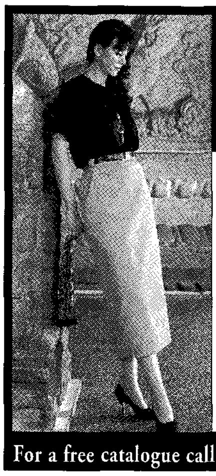


"Jean Sibelius, 1913," a portrait

(DETAIL) ANTTI FAVÉN/CENTRAL ART ARCHIVES/MUSEUM OF FINNISH ART, HELSINKI



he composer by Antti Faven. After a long spell in critical purgatory, his strange, rugged music is exerting its hypnotic pull.



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articulate longing for freedom. A rousing performance of "Finlandia"—such as the London Symphony Orchestra supplied in its encores at Lincoln Center—still touches a powerful sentimental chord. Yet the "nationalist" label came to limit Sibelius's appeal. In 1939 and 1940, it was fashionable to hail valiant little Finland, which was resisting the Soviet Union. It was less fashionable to do so a year later, when Finland allied itself with Nazi Germany.

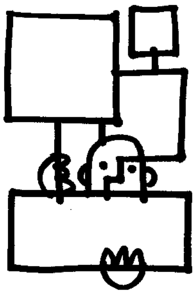
Sibelius was, in fact, both oversold and undercut by his devotees. Olin Downes, the chief critic of the *Times* in the thirties and forties, used him as a battering ram against the "de-raced" cosmopolitanism of Stravinsky and Schoenberg. The "new, clean, great man," "the last of the heroes," an "unwashed Viking" were some of the ludicrous accolades Downes bestowed on Sibelius; of one crescendo, he wrote, "The orchestra girds its loins and rises in Berserk fury." Virgil Thomson led the backlash in the *Herald Tribune*, pronouncing Sibelius "provincial beyond all description" and "not adult." Almost overnight, as the scholar Glenda Goss records, Sibelius became old hat. Still, such conductors as Karajan, Bernstein, and Davis continued to argue for him, more often on recordings than in the concert hall. No work, I'd guess, has been recorded more and performed less than the Fourth Symphony, Sibelius's pitch-black masterpiece of 1911. Boldly, Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra began their recent cycle with the Fourth, as if to say, "How provincial is this?"

The Fourth Symphony is usually the work that fanatics cite when they wish to establish Sibelius's "modernist" credentials. Their claim holds, up to a point. The first notes—an oscillating pattern of whole-tone intervals in the cellos, basses, and bassoons, starting loud and precipitately fading toward silence—are typical of the composer's language: the harmony is ambiguous but not dissonant, and before long the solo cello is tracing a melody around a familiar chord known the world over as "Tristan." Sibelius's harmonic materials can almost without exception be traced to Wagner's stockpile of spooky chords, with select additions from Mussorgsky and Borodin. After slow-motion storm and stress, the harmony settles on bright B major, with attendant Wagnerian fanfares in the horns. Anyone who had been expecting rectilinear abstraction will at this point feel disappointment; we're back among the Nordic heroes, in Dungeons & Dragons territory.

It may seem, in this and other works, that Sibelius has ventured into terra incognita and then scampered back to the safety of convention. But something else, something quietly unsettling, has happened: not a disruption of harmony but a disruption of pulse. Those first notes lengthen by degrees—a quarter note, a dotted quarter, then a half note—and any sense of a steady beat disappears. It's as if brakes were being applied to the music, or as if a gravitational body were exerting force from the outside. Rhythm, form, and time are bending. Recently, scholars have realized that the vocabulary generally used to describe symphonic structures—sonata form, theme and variations, and so forth—does not suffice for the later Sibelius. James Hepokoski, the leading writer on Sibelius, speaks instead of "soundsheets" (restless shimmers of sound from which more definite ideas germinate); "static blur" (passages in which tones pile up into an amorphous, softly dissonant mass); and "rotation" (a group of ideas passing in waves, changing shape with each cycle). In the Fourth, the first movement ends on the same pitch with which the second movement begins; ditto the third and the fourth. Music is no longer linear, but circular.

The cumulative effect of these techniques is hypnosis. I think most listeners who went to Avery Fisher Hall for Northern Lights experienced the Sibelius trance—a state at once alert and helpless. This composer speaks to our twentieth-century sensation of time. Theodor Adorno, in his book on Mahler, devised a set of metaphors based on the bourgeois novel; Sibelius is better served by metaphors from film. The opening of the Fourth is like a long take. A few moments later, as C major slides toward F sharp, it's like a dissolve, one image merging into another. Often the argument seems to arbitrarily leap ahead, as if with a jump cut; and recent research into Sibelius's working methods tells us that he did indeed work this way, stitching disparate ideas—even entire movements—into a seamless whole. The great Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky spoke of film as the art of "sculpting in time"; Sibelius did something similar.

We are left with a paradox: a composer who uses a nineteenth-century vocabulary but who speaks with a twentieth-century voice. A nagging question for conductors is how to "place" this composer in relation to older repertory. During Sibelius's lifetime, much was made of his supposed connection to Beethoven, and pioneering performances by Koussevitzky and Toscanini were correspondingly rugged and argumentative. In recent years, tempos have slowed: Sibelius is seen more as a Brucknerian architect of sound. Colin Davis adheres to the architectural school; his tempos at Lincoln Center sometimes approached total stasis. At the same time, he gave the music exceptional solidity, particularly in such tricky constructions as the Third and Seventh Symphonies, and his noble Second capped the series handsomely. (He also introduced American listeners to the Swedish soprano Katarina Dalayman, who delivered five Sibelius songs in a magnificent Wagnerian voice.) It's interesting to compare Davis's Sibelius with some new recordings on the BIS label, in which Osmo Vänskä, a little-known Finn, leads the Lahti Symphony. Vänskä draws out the strangeness and wildness in the music; he is electric in his handling of dynamics, of Sibelius's endless, microscopic crescendos and diminuendos. Davis tends to pass over some of the composer's more cryptic markings; at the end of the Seventh, for example, he has the brass continue to build when Sibelius explicitly requests an anticlimax. Vänskä, in his recording, plays the score as written, and the whole tone of the ending changes: it becomes a question in place of an exclamation.



Composers, too, have had varying responses to Sibelius. At first, he influenced mainly conservatives, especially the English pastoral school of Vaughan Williams, Bax, and Walton. But he also became, over time, a kind of secret fetish among composers of a more progressive type. John Adams often cites Sibelius as a model, and the resemblance is evident in the richly scored minimalism of "Harmonielehre," among other works. The dense, impressionistic scores of the French Spectralist school—a swirl of overtones above a shadowy bass—were inspired in part by Sibelius's soundsheets. Morton Feldman modelled certain aspects of his hazily beautiful work on Sibelian effects. In a lecture at Darmstadt, the capital of the postwar avant-garde, Feldman proclaimed, "The people who you think are radicals might really be conservatives. The people who you think are conservative might really be radical." He then began to sing the Sibelius Fourth.

It is the Finns, of course, who have studied Sibelius most closely. Northern Lights ended with a concert by the Avanti! chamber orchestra, which Esa-Pekka Salonen and Jukka-Pekka Saraste founded in 1983 as an alternative to the mainstream Finnish orchestras. The program began with Aarre Merikanto's immaculately Bergian "'Schott' Concerto," the first post-Sibelius work to break away from native Romanticism toward European modernism. The centerpiece was "Graal Théâtre," a sprawling, violently expressive, and most un-Sibelius-like violin concerto by Kaija Saariaho. Yet with Magnus Lindberg's sweetly brilliant "Arena 2," the festival seemed to come full circle: long, low thrums on the cellos, slow swells in brass, and elemental Wagnerian harmonies all pointed in Sibelius's direction. Lindberg's music, the best to have come out of Finland in recent years, is modern in tone and technique, but it does not neglect its inheritance. Sibelius's greatest legacy to his native country was his contradictory nature—his instinct for the heroic and the esoteric, for kitsch and the sublime.

SIBELIUS did not live to see his music cross ideological borders. In old age, he was imprisoned by his reputation: on the one hand, he was exalted as the greatest composer since Beethoven, and, on the other, he was denounced as "the worst composer in the world" (the title of a monograph by René Leibowitz). His experiments in pure sound failed to impress the modernists; at the same time, they disconcerted conservative allies like Olin Downes. Sibelius wrote in his diary that he seemed destined to remain a "'nationalistic' curiosity." Something even darker crept into his conversations with himself during the Second World War: an awareness of the crimes of Finland's German ally. As the culture god of the new Finnish state, he could see no difference between music and history. In some diary entries that have recently been translated, he wrote, "I am not guilty"; he wrote also, "*the tragedy begins*," and, in German, "the great disaster." The Eighth Symphony may have been burned that day, and Sibelius is said to have felt relief after his auto-da-fé. Like Prospero, he had finally set himself free. ♦

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BOOKS

THE WAR BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The sixties come to an all-black town in Oklahoma.

BY LOUIS MENAND

NOVELISTS do not generally make the best pundits. Readers who know Toni Morrison only through her occasional contributions to public debate might reasonably conclude that her views are not characterized by moderation. Her most recent intervention appears in a collection, published last year, called "Birth of a Nation'hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O. J. Simpson Case." Anyone who believes that Simpson probably did murder his former wife and her friend Ronald Goldman, Morrison asserts in the volume's introductory essay, is relying on a racial myth—the myth that black men are capable of transforming themselves in an instant from smiling sycophants into irrational beasts. For, without the myth, as any unbiased observer can plainly see, the evidence fails to cohere.

She knows because she's tried. Without the assumption of "black irrationality," she claims, she has been unable to come up with a plausible scenario in which Simpson is the killer. "I have wasted piles of paper trying to complete a believable narrative of such a figure," she explains. "I tried it with a cunning, pre-meditating killer. I tried it as an explosive, spontaneous slaughter. I gave the character an intricate interior life; then a simpler one. I made him a drug user; a drug hater; a devoted father; an indifferent father; a violent husband; a patient husband.... All my efforts collapsed into nonsense. Without the support of black irrationality...the fictional case not only could not be made, it was silly."

This would be a peculiar assertion from almost anybody, but from Morrison it practically amounts to self-contradiction. Most people who believe that Simpson did it think that the reason was not his "black irrationality" but his jealous possessiveness of his ex-wife. Men (of all races) do sometimes stalk and kill their estranged lovers. It occurs often enough to constitute a recognizable type of craziness, and Toni Morrison is pretty much the last person in the world you would expect to have a hard time imagining it. Her last novel, "Jazz" (1992), happens to be the story (based on a real event) of a mild-mannered, likable, law-abiding middle-aged black man who stalks and kills, as though she were a wild animal, his former mistress, a much younger and lighter-complexioned woman who has got bored with his attentions. No one thinks that this novel is about the duplicity of black men. People think it's about the duplicity of a certain kind of romantic passion—a story that tries to reflect the mood swings, from ecstasy to violence, expressed in the style of music named in the title.

Morrison's new novel, "Paradise" (Knopf; $25), begins with a description of nine law-abiding, God-fearing, and heavily armed black men storming a remote house in the Oklahoma countryside in order to murder the four women who live there. These are the opening paragraphs:

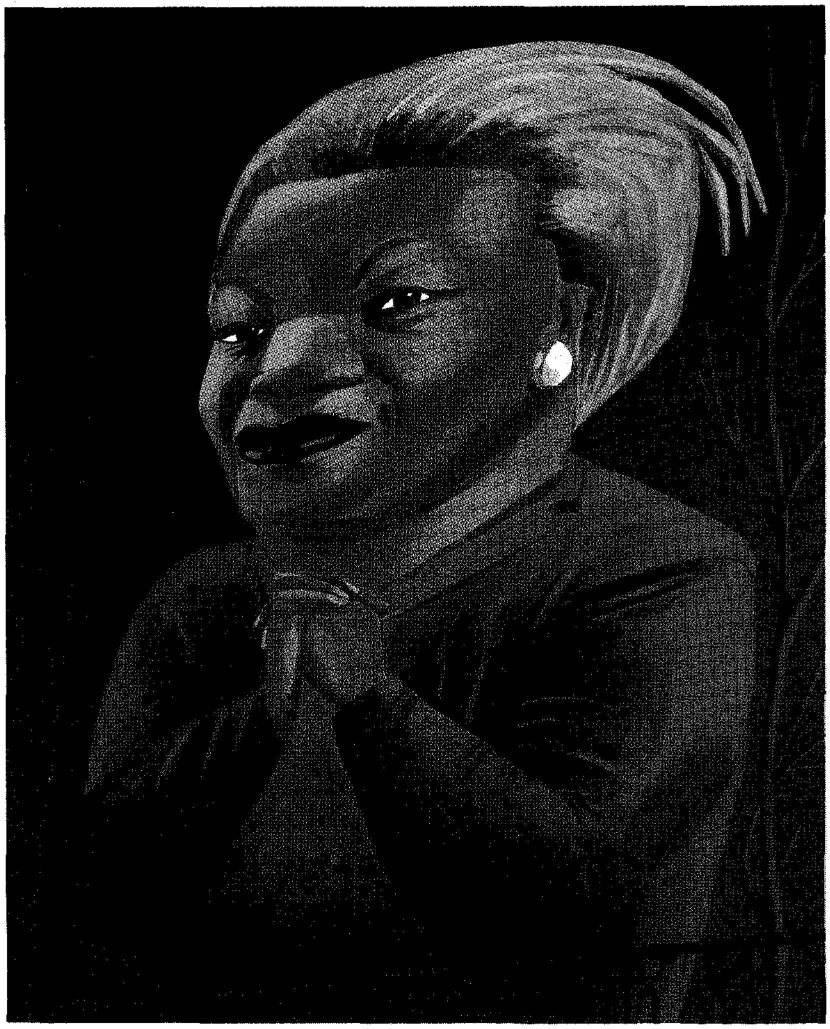
> They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time. No need to hurry out here. They are seventeen miles from a town which has ninety miles between it and any other. Hiding places will be plentiful in the Convent, but there is time and the day has just begun.
>
> They are nine, over twice the number of the women they are obliged to stampede or kill and they have the paraphernalia for either requirement: rope, a palm leaf cross, handcuffs, Mace and sunglasses, along with clean, handsome guns.
>
> They have never been this deep in the Convent. Some of them have parked Chevrolets near its porch to pick up a string of peppers or have gone into the kitchen for a gallon of barbecue sauce; but only a few have seen the halls, the chapel, the schoolroom, the bedrooms. Now they all will. And at last they will see the cellar and expose its filth to the light that is soon to scour the Oklahoma sky.

One member of this posse is the former lover of one of the women in the house; she ends up shot through the head. The whole novel is about the male scapegoating of sexually unattached women—a phenomenon significant enough, in Morrison's view, to be made to symbolize the entire period of social turbulence, from 1968 to 1976, in which her story is set. This is imaginable, and O. J. Simpson cutting his ex-wife's throat is not? Morrison has been writing versions of the Simpson story for ten years.

Those versions are not only more compelling than her analysis of the Simpson case; they are more compelling than the Simpson case itself. For Morrison is a novelist of great imaginative sympathy. She extends it to her characters, and she extends it to her readers as well. She has points to make, but so do most novelists, and she knows how to make them novelistically.

"Paradise" is the strangest and most original book that Morrison has written. It is unlikely to achieve, or to achieve as quickly, the kind of canonical esteem that her two earlier major novels, "Song of Solomon" (1977) and "Beloved" (1987), enjoy. The writing is more demanding and takes more chances; the themes and the characters, because they belong to such a recent historical period, are more fraught and controversial. And the book is obsessed with a subject that many readers, including a lot of the teachers who have helped make the earlier novels virtually required reading in American high schools and colleges, may not feel particularly engaged with—which is Christianity.

Morrison once said that "Beloved" was intended as the first in a trilogy of novels, each of which would be about a different kind of love. Maternal love is the love in "Beloved"; romantic love, licit and illicit, is the love in "Jazz." The love in "Paradise" turns out to be the love of God—God's love for human beings, and their love for God. In one sense, of course, Americans engage with religious issues all the time, in debates over abortion, homosexual rights, school prayer, censorship, and pluralism. But "Paradise" doesn't take up any of these public matters. Its concerns are entirely unfashionable: sacrifice, obedience, redemption, providence, and caritas; the meaning of Christ's teaching; and the nature of paradise.



Toni Morrison's new novel, "Paradise," is the strangest and most original of her works.

MARK ULRIKSEN

The novel is shot through with Biblical allusions, most frequently to the story of the Israelites, which Morrison recapitulates as the legend of a band of black people who flee the South following the debacle of Reconstruction to found an all-black town in the territory of Oklahoma. The men we see storming the house in the opening pages of the novel are the descendants of the nineteenth-century pilgrims. These men are deeply invested in the traditions of their community, which involve Old Testament conceptions of suffering, obedience, and patriarchy, and which they fear no longer command the respect of the younger generation. They have decided to take the Lord's work of vengeance into their own hands.

The house they invade, seventeen miles outside of town, is known as the Convent, although it never was a convent—only, at one point, a Catholic school for Indian girls. With the demise of the school, the building has become a kind of sanctuary for women who have been abused, jilted, rejected, or outcast. The woman who presides over this female commune is called Consolata. She is an orphan who was reared by the Mother Superior, now dead, of the old Catholic school, whose name was Mary; and she is the one who gets shot through the head. After her death, at the end of the book, there are suggestions that the town begins to heal itself.

If this way of summarizing the book makes it seem oppressively allegorical, then it is the wrong way to summarize the book. For the genius of "Paradise" is that the Biblical subtext is rarely allowed to obtrude on the reader's attention to the gritty particulars of the characters' stories. The novel is arranged in nine sections, each named for a female character, and each contributing a piece to the over-all design. The sections are mini-narratives in themselves, and some of them are stunning, particularly the second, entitled "Mavis," about a woman who inadvertently suffocates two of her infant children by leaving them alone in the car on a hot day. The writing evokes the misery of Mavis's existence, her terrified abjectness, her sweetness and her stupidity, her desperation in flight, and, surrounding her story, the look and feel of ordinary American life in 1968. And the chapter is less than thirty pages long. You don't think about possible scriptural parallels. You just wonder how life could get like this.

"Paradise" is about an entire community undergoing the pangs of change. Deacon and Steward (Morrison has never been subtle with names), descendants of the town's original patriarch, are the town bankers. They are childless, so they have groomed their nephew, K.D., to be their heir. But K.D. is fickle; he plays up to his uncles' idea of him, but he also gets a fourteen-year-old pregnant, and that initiates a feud between her family and his. This crisis within the town's first family is what leads eventually to the armed assault on the Convent. There are many other threads, and the Convent has its own cast: Mavis; Grace, who wanders into town on a bizarre sexual quest; Seneca, a white runaway; Pallas, whose mother has stolen her boyfriend; and so on. The novel's effectiveness depends on Morrison's ability to make the full social web appear before our eyes, but much of its pleasure comes from our immersion in the individual stories.

One reason that these stories are so gripping is that they are hard to understand. The energy we have to spend puzzling out the various pieces and getting them into some kind of satisfactory narrative shape keeps our focus on the realistic plane of the novel and allows the allegorical machinery to operate more or less hidden from view. The obscurity is deliberate. Morrison has always been careful to make her writing elliptical. Her reason, as she once explained, is that she wants "to provide the places and spaces so that the reader can participate . . . to have the reader *work* with the author in the construction of the book." We get fixated on the details because we are trying to keep up our end of the collaborative business of getting the story told.

Morrison has listed this technique as one of the characteristics of what she calls "Black art." It derives, she says, from the call-and-response style of black preaching, and also, presumably, from the give-and-take of jazz playing. But the technique has a literary source: it comes out of the modernist fiction of Woolf, Joyce, Hemingway, and Faulkner. Morrison wrote a master's thesis, at Cornell, on Woolf and Faulkner back in 1955, and her novels reflect their influence, plus, beginning with "Song of Solomon," the influence of Gabriel García Márquez. Her achievement is to have adapted that modernist literary tradition to her own subject matter, which is the experience of African-American women, and thereby to have made it new.

Formally, "Paradise" is Morrison's most Faulknerian novel. Its analogues are "The Sound and the Fury" (1929) and "As I Lay Dying" (1930), books organized as sequences of distinct narrations, each narration having the point of view of a particular character, each challengingly indirect. Those novels, too, have allegorical subtexts almost entirely hidden from view: in "The Sound and the Fury," it is the Easter story; in "As I Lay Dying," the story of Exodus. The difference is that Faulkner's Biblical allusions are bitterly ironic; they make for farce, not for uplift. In Morrison they are never ironic. She really does see the fallen world as infused with spirit, and she wants her stories to hold out hope, not to validate resentment or despair. "It should be beautiful, and powerful," she has said of good fiction, "but it should also *work*. It should have something in it that enlightens, something in it that opens the door and points the way." This is the genuinely preacherly part of her aesthetic.

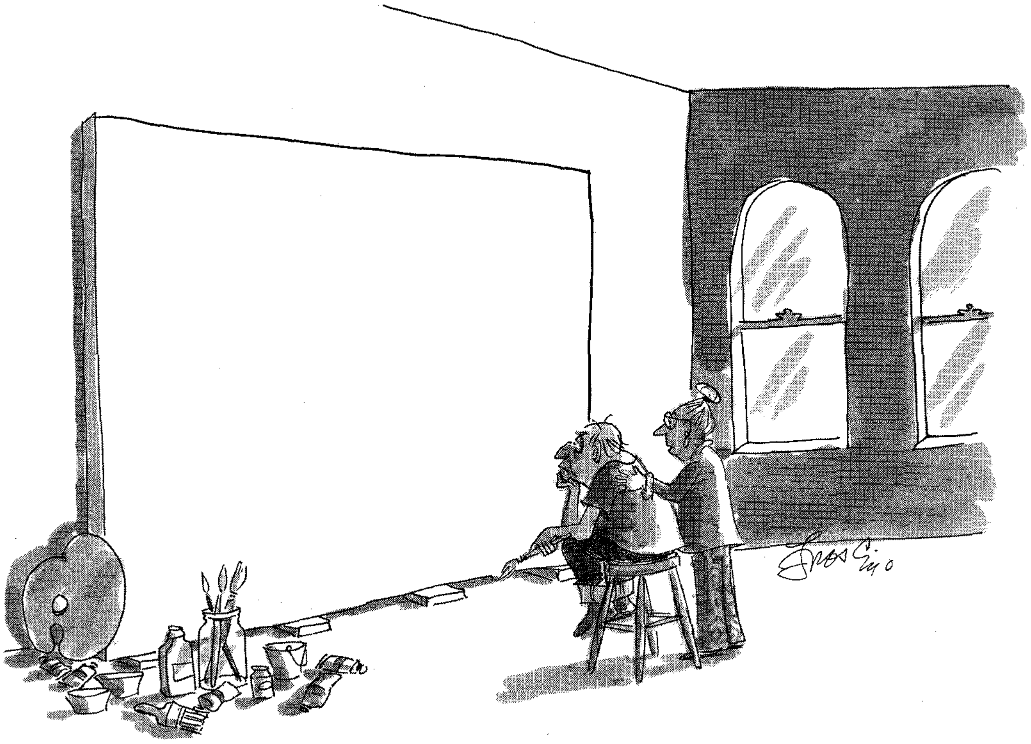
Morrison's novels seem so smoothly designed to gratify the contemporary interest in race and gender that it's easy to think of her as writing to keep up with a trend. Since 1989, two years after "Beloved," her work has been the subject, in whole or in part, of nearly a hundred doctoral dissertations. But in fact it is the trend that has caught up with her. She is one of the creators of the taste by which she is appreciated. That people think of "the African-American female experience" as a meaningful category in fiction or, for that matter, in life is due partly to her efforts.

An essay she wrote in the *Times Magazine* in 1971, "What the Black Woman Thinks About Women's Lib," was a brilliant laying out of all the ways in which the interests of black women are not the same as the interests of either white women ("Black women have found it impossible to respect white women," she calmly explained) or black men. For centuries in America, she argued, the black woman had nothing to fall back on—"not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, not anything. And out of the profound desolation of her reality she may very well have invented herself."

When Morrison wrote that essay, she was an editor at Random House, where she published new African-American writers. She was bringing up two sons as a single parent. (She and her husband had divorced in 1964.) And she had just published, the year before, her first novel, "The Bluest Eye," which had taken more than five years to write. "The Bluest Eye" is about the problem of black self-image in a white culture, from the point of view of a little black girl. Morrison's next novel, "Sula," is about a black woman whose insistence on sexual freedom leads to disaster; it appeared in 1974. Both novels showed black communities subject to white racism but divided against themselves as well. They were efforts to explore a fractured social psychology, not just individual injustice. And then came "Song of Solomon," with its portrayal of African-American matriarchy in full, quasi-mythical flower.

"Paradise" takes place, in other words, during the period when Toni Morrison (or Chloe Anthony Wofford, which is her original name) became Toni Morrison.

What is most striking about the novel, though, is its sense of ruefulness. That "Paradise" should appear only a few months after Philip Roth's "American Pastoral" has to be one of the weirder coincidences in American literary history. These are not writers one ordinarily imagines walking hand in hand, as it were, among common themes and concerns. But their books are set in the same historical period, as it is reflected in the fate of small ethnic communities, and they cloak their subjects in the same metaphor. Roth's novel



"If only you could have frozen some ideas in your prolific youth."

has three sections: "Paradise Remembered," "The Fall," and "Paradise Lost." Roth, too, is a writer who was "made" by the very cultural changes that his novel contemplates with ambivalence and regret.

"Paradise" is, in the end, more hopeful, but the hopefulness is not what makes it interesting. Life at the all-female Convent is even more dysfunctional than life in the generationally divided black town down the road. This book is not about the righteousness and the purity of the women's movement. Most of the time, the women in the Convent are a squabbling, depressed, and self-destructive group. Their victimhood has not made them saintly. They come to enact the faintly rancid pseudo-anarchism of early-seventies counterculture—reflexively contemptuous of small-town virtues without having anything more interesting than small-town vices to propose in their place.

The women are immediately recognizable as specific historical types, and the whole novel is an uncanny reproduction of the America of Nixon and Ford. The music, the clothes, the cars, the paramilitary types, the embattled clergymen, the straitlaced middle-aged women undergoing the first stirrings of liberation, the teen-age radicals and the teen-age delinquents, the predatory, the square, and the dropouts are all represented within the context of a black community in rural Oklahoma. In the end, the characters sort themselves out into forces of light and forces of darkness, as the Biblical echoes suggest they will. But until then the moral tension is sustained and dramatic. Morrison has somehow captured, with this odd and original story, the way it was.

ALL is not perfect in "Paradise." The lack of a central character is a liability that is never completely overcome. A minister, called Richard Misner, seems to emerge at the end as the authorially approved conscience of the community. But before that he has seemed just another late-sixties type, a hip but earnest Christian existentialist—the authority figure who infuriates the other authority figures by insisting that the kids are all right. There is also a problem with the plot. The novel opens with the showdown at the Con-

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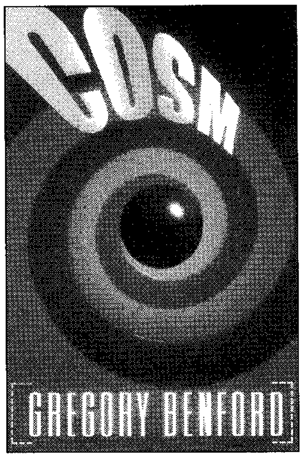

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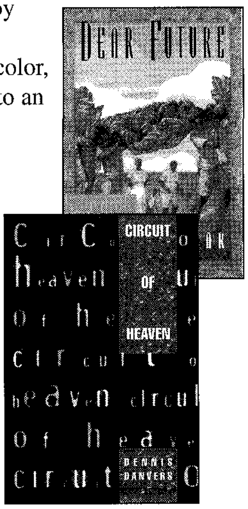

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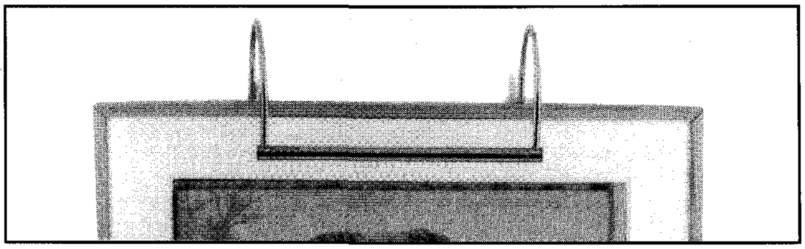

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vent, and then circles back to tell the story of how things got to that point. But the logic is never convincing. You can see why the men in the town fear and loathe the women in the Convent, but you can't see why they regard them as so immediate and obvious a threat that they would stage a commando raid on the place. They strike you as the sort of men who would prefer just to offer the women some cash to get lost. But the raid is thematically important to Morrison, because it enacts the psychology of scapegoating. Independent women represent the decay of social order; they are threats to male self-assurance. So they have to be punished and eliminated. (Associations with the Simpson case, needless to say, are authorially unsanctioned.)

Morrison's fiction can sometimes seem a little willed. Certain images and episodes, certain icons and formulas are there, you feel, not because the story requires them but because Morrison thinks they ought to be there. This has to do, possibly, with her sense that she is not just writing novels; she is constructing a literary tradition. This willed quality is most often betrayed in the tendency of Morrison's stories suddenly to sprout wings, for her realism to turn magical. Visions, portents, potions, ghosts, resurrections, exorcisms, blind seers, tales of miraculous doings turn up sooner or later in most of her books, and the last fifty pages of "Paradise" have them all. The ending of the novel is a slightly dizzying amalgam of spiritual manifestations, culminating in the image of a kind of feminist Pietà. To write about sacrifice, you do not need to show a resurrection. "Paradise" has four.

The supernatural moments in Morrison's fiction often seem highly self-conscious, as though they were calculated to make a point. They are. They are meant to represent the resuscitation of what Morrison calls "discredited knowledge," the pre-scientific world view of the folk. They are intended as a rebuke to the empirical and secular modern mind, and they belong to the "pointing the way" mission of Morrison's writing. The supernaturalism suggests (as it does in García Márquez) that there are other ways of making the world intelligible, that we are not restricted to the paradigms of everyday realism.

One of the purposes of writing novels is to get outside the paradigms of everyday realism, and the fantastic is a legitimate resource for the novelist to use. On the other hand, a lot of what Morrison calls discredited knowledge is discredited for a reason. The tilt toward the supernatural in her novels is generally a tilt toward myth, toward the construction of some archetypal account of human relations. But the racism that Morrison complains about so energetically in her essay on the Simpson case is a perfect example of why archetypal accounts of human relations are good things to avoid. Why cure a myth that you don't like by trying to substitute a myth that you do like? Why not eschew myth altogether?

Morrison can write strongly against mythic thinking as a novelist, too. Mythic thinking, after all, is precisely what the small black town in "Paradise" is dying from. It has become the victim of its own legend. One of the novel's sections is about a woman named Patricia who has devoted her life to reconstructing the genealogy of the town since its founding. Patricia labors away for years, like a character in "Absalom, Absalom!" or "One Hundred Years of Solitude," in thrall to the mysteries of descent and inheritance. Then one day she realizes that belief in the magic of blood is what is destroying the community she has been trying to memorialize with her research, and that genealogy is spurious anyway, since people lie about their sex lives. So she collects all her papers and carries them out into the yard to burn them: "She had to tear the covers off the composition notebooks and hold them slant with a stick so they would not smother the fire.... Did they really think they could keep this up? The numbers, the bloodlines, the who fucks who? All those generations...kept going, just to end up narrow as bale wire?"

It's a neatly emblematic scene. It underlines the teaching of the novel, which is that the only Heaven we can know is in the here and now, that it doesn't matter to God who our grandparents were. But it is also a brilliant turn on the traditions of historical fiction to which "Paradise," up to that point, had seemed to belong. It symbolically explodes one of the myths of race. And it is Morrison at her novelistic best. ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

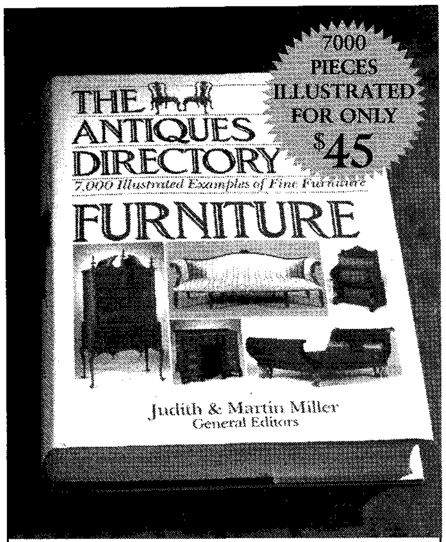
The Art of Scandal: the Life and Times of Isabella Stewart Gardner, by Douglass Shand-Tucci (HarperCollins; $27.50). This intimate, engrossing biography finally gives the creator of one of the world's great museums credit for her achievements. In Gardner's lifetime (1840-1924), women's abilities were so thoroughly undervalued that few now know, for example, that she herself was the architectural designer of her museum, Fenway Court. Shand-Tucci also emphasizes that Gardner, a New Yorker who married into Boston society, extended her friendship to other outsiders, from African-Americans to woman artists, and his expertise in American cultural history greatly enriches his narrative.

God & the American Writer, by Alfred Kazin (Knopf; $25). For some American writers, God was an opportunity lost early in the history of this nation; for others, he is a possibility still lurking in the present. Kazin listens to the voices of more than a dozen writers, from Hawthorne to Faulkner, and reflects, discursively, on the way each one refracts the problem of God. But Kazin's God is not a personal deity so much as a national one, captured less accurately in the liturgy of a church than in the literary conscience. Few books of literary criticism have been as well written—or as meaningful—as this one.

The Slave Trade, by Hugh Thomas (Simon & Schuster; $37.50). Although slavery had almost disappeared in Northern Europe by 1100, it survived around the Mediterranean, where Christians and Muslims enslaved each other (and everybody else) without compunction. Thus, when fifteenth-century Portuguese began exploring the west coast of Africa in search of gold, they traded for slaves as a familiar kind of merchandise. Thomas's meticulous account demonstrates that the boom following the New World's demand for labor profited Africans as well as Europeans, and that slavery was accepted by both entrepreneurial blacks and whites until the nineteenth century.

The American Opera Singer, by Peter G. Davis (Doubleday; $40). Crammed with famous names and telling anecdotes, this book records the emergence of American opera singers and the development of musical institutions to train and support them. It also traces the evolution of musical styles, which from 1825 on have placed new demands on the voice. Davis finds today's American singers among the world's most skilled and versatile, but he fears that this professionalism breeds homogeneity.

On the Surface of Things, by Felice Frankel and George M. Whitesides (Chronicle; $22.95). A stunning collection of fifty-eight photographs with accompanying text, in which the authors—a photographer and a chemist, respectively—have given us remarkable closeups of the things we find, make, and destroy. Here is an electron micrograph of a compact disk, a surface on which "The Well-Tempered Clavier" and Led Zeppelin "are both ruby glitters." Here, too, is Shakespeare's signature, all swoops and smudges, which can be dated by the rate of migration of iron present in the ink.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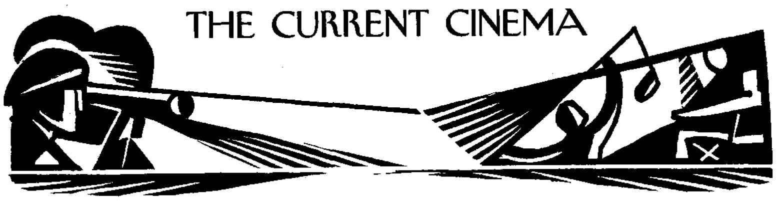
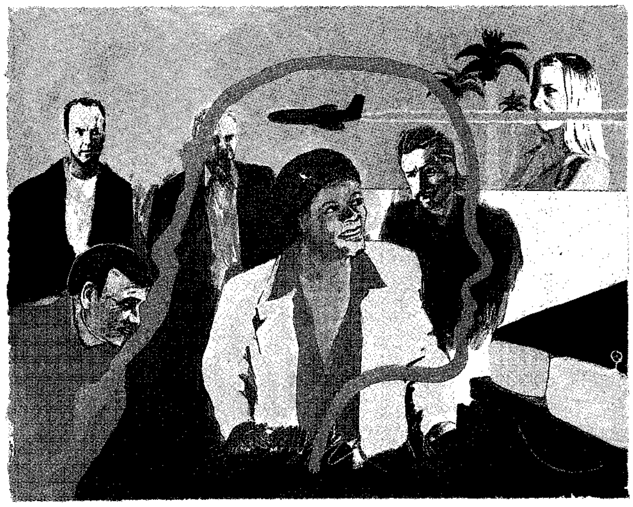


SPLIT SCREEN

"Jackie Brown" and "Oscar and Lucinda."

BY ANTHONY LANE

IN Elmore Leonard's 1992 novel, "Rum Punch," the heroine was a white female flight attendant named Jackie Burke. Five years on, she has metamorphosed into a black female flight attendant named Jackie Brown in a movie called "Jackie Brown." The makeover comes courtesy of Quentin Tarantino, never a man to refuse the promise of cool. He duly assigns the lead role to Pam Grier, who was big in the exploitation flicks of the nineteen-seventies; given the manner of her reappearance, in fact, the seventies never ended. Our first sight of Jackie is in profile—bosom first, then eventually the rest of her—as she rides an airport walkway against a wall of blinding blue. Nostalgia nuts in the audience will appreciate the infant cry of a wa-wa pedal and the funky retro lettering of the credits. Jackie Brown has touched down in Tarantinoland.



"Jackie Brown" is Tarantino's most democratic movie to date.

GIBB SLIFE

The groove runs out when Jackie is stopped by federal agents, who find a bundle of cash and a sachet of drugs in her luggage. She is arrested, charged, and released on bail of ten thousand dollars. The bail bondsman is Max Cherry (Robert Forster), and the man who puts up the money is an arms dealer called Ordell (Samuel L. Jackson). When we first encounter Ordell, he is watching a videotape entitled "Chicks Who Love Guns." (Imagine the fun that Tarantino had making *that.*) Jackie was carrying a payment for Ordell when she got busted, and he reckons that she may tip him off to the authorities as part of a plea bargain. Jackie will indeed betray him, but she wants to bamboozle the Feds, too, and she wants to walk away with half a million bucks, and she wants Max Cherry to help her. And, lo, it all comes to pass.

The movie, needless to say, is more intricate than that: it finds room for Ordell's slightly useless pal Louis (Robert De Niro) and Ordell's completely useless girlfriend Melanie (Bridget Fonda), a zeppelin among airheads. "That shit is going to rob you of your ambition," Ordell tells her as she hunkers down to her pot pipe. "Not if your ambition is to get high and watch TV," Melanie replies, in a noble mission statement for our times. These folks provide what could have been mere grace notes to the main theme of Jackie's scam, but they don't feel that way. When the camera is on Melanie, then Melanie is the most important person onscreen; the same goes for Jackie, Ordell, and the rest of them. The upshot is that "Jackie Brown" becomes the most democratic and least volatile of Tarantino's movies to date—he seems to be tempering his own taste for junk melodrama. Much of the film is surprisingly drab to look at, and some patches are borderline dull: when Max leaves a parking lot, the camera lingers to savor the blank landscape and a sky the color of old milk.

All this makes "Jackie Brown" the movie that Elmore Leonard addicts have been waiting for. We have patiently grimaced through "Cat Chaser" and "52 Pick-Up," we have borne the burden of Burt Reynolds in "Stick" and Charles Bronson in "Mr. Majestyk," and we have privately confessed our disappointment with "Get Shorty," a sunlit cartoon that looked too happy for the scuzz and haze of Leonard's world. The novelist himself was one of the executive producers of "Jackie Brown," and the film certainly pitches its lowlife at the right height. We are left with just one question: Is this the movie that Tarantino addicts have been waiting for? The long riffs that pour out of Samuel L. Jackson and the meaningless exchanges—verbal Ping-Pong pretending to be crossfire—that he enjoys with Pam Grier and De Niro are *echt* Elmore Leonard, but, to be honest, don't they drag a bit? It may be that the screen is less forgiving of such errant comic jive.

Still, the picture has its fascinations. Tarantino is unlikely to grow into a moralist, but there are distinct signs that he wishes to grow out of being a hipster. What little tension exists in the movie emerges not from its tautness as a thriller but from the director's uneasy standoff with the thriller style. He uses a split screen, but only once, so that it seems more like a gesture than like a device; he doubles, or trebles, back to show the same incident—the planned handover of the loot—from the viewpoint of three different characters, but, again, his love of a puzzle has little or no effect on your pulse. Much simpler is the crane shot that follows Ordell as he sets off in his car, turns a corner, parks in a deserted lot, shoots someone, and then drives away. The gracefulness of the scene makes it all the more frightening. Who would have believed that the maker of "Reservoir Dogs" would soon acquire the cold Hitchcockian virtue of keeping your distance?

It is no coincidence, perhaps, that "Jackie Brown" offers expert playing rather than standout performances. Robert Forster, for instance—solid and sad, with a touch of Raymond Carver about him—is the most dependable presence in the film. Jackson is fired up, yet I couldn't help glimpsing something queasy in his role; it's as if Tarantino were getting off on the idea of a character who allows him, the white screenwriter, to write the word "nigger" with impunity as many times as possible. Tarantino is so enamored of black culture that he veers toward parody: Jackie Brown is basically a gun-toting love goddess, and Pam Grier, whose principal expression is an Elvis-style curl of the upper lip, doesn't do quite enough to drag her down to earth. The gallant Tarantino obviously plans to recharge her career, as he did Travolta's in "Pulp Fiction," but it has to be said: Ma'am, you're no John Travolta.

"Jackie Brown" reaches critical mass when Max sees Jackie for the very first time, as she leaves jail. She sashays toward him through the shadows, taking as long over her entrance as Omar Sharif did on a camel. Tarantino simply points one camera at Pam Grier, gets another to zoom in on Robert Forster's face, and puts a record on the soundtrack—"Why do I feel this way?" It's a good question: here is a gifted director who is still uncertain in the presence of love but who knows all too well what love is supposed to look like in the movies. He goes through the motions, but with such passionate insistence that the motions themselves become moving. This desire not so much to open your heart as to anatomize the idea of romance is oddly un-American; Tarantino's production company, A Band Apart, is named after a Godard picture, and "Jackie Brown" makes a pretty good French movie. Everyone speaks American English, but that speech goes nowhere and dies like the dialogue of a Rohmer film; there may be titles setting the action in "The City of Compton" and "The City of Hawthorne," but the titles themselves lend a ludic, Godard-like choppiness to the proceedings. "Jackie Brown" blows hot and cold, but you get used to its uncertain climate, and the final scene with Max Cherry and Jackie Brown should sweep you lightly off your feet. He is fifty-six, she is forty-four; when was the last time you went to the movies—let alone a Tarantino movie—and saw a fond, unironic, interracial kiss between a couple who are a hundred years old?

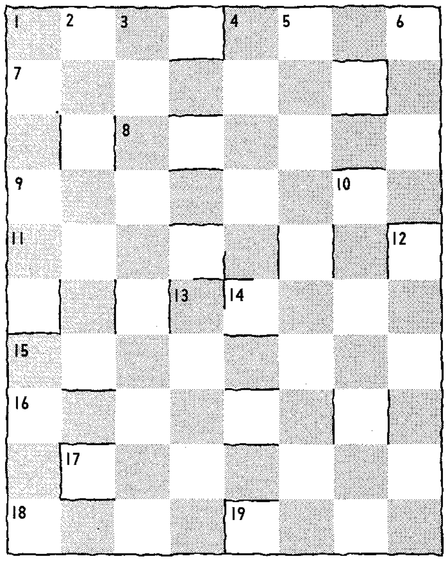
FOR a more decorous adaptation, try Gillian Armstrong's version of "Oscar and Lucinda"—the long novel, by Peter Carey, that won the Booker Prize in 1988. The Oscar in question (Ralph Fiennes) is a luckless priest and a blessed gambler who sets sail from Victorian England, where he was raised and bruised by religious austerity, for an Australia that proves to be almost equally tight-laced. On board ship, he meets Lucinda (Cate Blanchett), a matching misfit. She is an heiress, and the owner of a glassworks in Sydney; more to the point, she is a fellow-gambler. You can tell that the two of them are destined for each other because both have bright, carroty hair—the sort of detail that sounds charming and propitious on the page but ends up looking cute and a little rigged once you see it brought, or dyed, to life.

Armstrong is a formidable moviemaker, and she specializes in formidable women: Cate Blanchett takes her place in a roll call that includes Judy Davis in "My Brilliant Career," Lisa Harrow in "The Last Days of Chez Nous," and an entire family in "Little Women." If anything, Lucinda is the poor relation; she seems twitchy and neurasthenic, stirred more by flights of enthusiasm than by the fiery good sense that you first expect. She and Oscar only make each other worse; when he realizes that he will never win her love, he determines to do something loftily mad on her behalf, and she encourages him. They construct a glass church, which Oscar then transports through hostile terrain to the parish of the Reverend Hasset (Ciaran Hinds), the stiff to whom Lucinda is devoted. Various ordeals arise along the way, but for me the major surprise was that Oscar failed to bump into Werner Herzog: if there are churches to be humped across country, surely the creator of "Fitzcarraldo" ought to come along for the ride.

It's possible to be ground down, rather than spooked, by this dogged reliance on the surreal. Armstrong is too skilled an explorer of normal behavior, whether intense or throwaway, to be at home in the realms of abnormality. Nevertheless, if we must have oddballs, it's good to have them played by actors like Fiennes and Blanchett, both of whom are smart enough to flash the comic flip side of their troubled souls. Viewers of a nervous disposition should be warned about a sequence that involves the splitting of a skull. For a man of God with the muscles of a boy and the self-confidence of a hamster, Oscar sure has a mean way with an axe. ◆

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 28 BY FRASER SIMPSON



ACROSS

- 1 Cards lying in front of a cesspool (4)
- 4 A great number float (4)
- 7 Angry worker trapped in arena (7)
- 8 Asian residents deposit $1,000 in banks (6)
- 9 Musicians flying starship (8)
- 11 Always the First Lady, right? (4)
- 14 First of critics covering talk (4)
- 15 Bury established business (8)
- 16 Craving engineering T-shirt (6)
- 17 More annoying nobleman has hit the slopes (7)
- 18 First off, picked nylons (4)
- 19 Measure someone in pain, say (4)

DOWN

- 1 More cunning sort of hunter (6)
- 2 Travellers cut short party hosted by actor James (7)
- 3 Suits each Tuesday displayed in doorways (10)
- 4 Strict doctor with identification (5)
- 5 Held by Danes: the ticket number? (10)
- 6 Throw to shortstop (4)
- 10 Awkwardly rotates kitchen appliance (7)
- 12 Pair of athletes wear out clothing (6)
- 13 Inherently blue (3,2)
- 15 Desire a vermouth before church (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 28 will appear next week. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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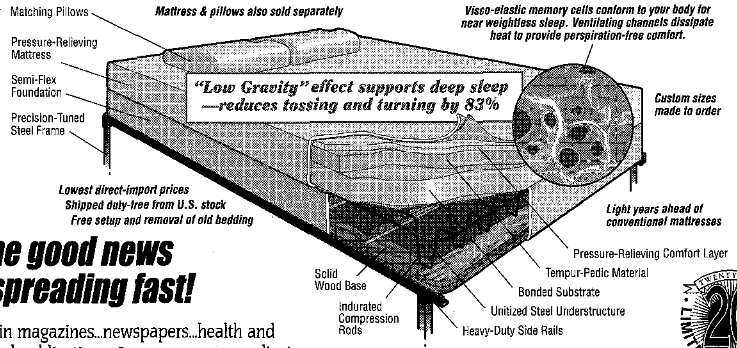
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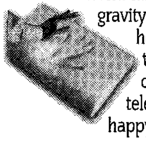

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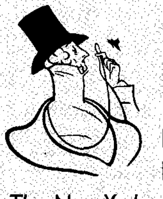

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

LAST GASP COLLEGE FAIR

BY BRUCE McCALL

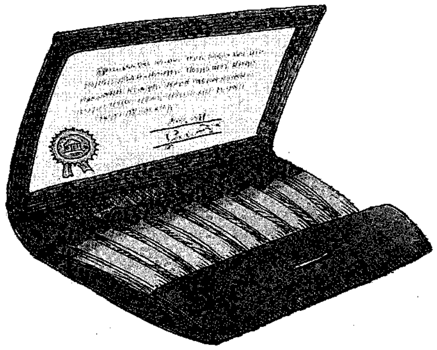
Leopold & Loeb College—One undergraduate put it this way: "L. & L.'s unique guiding philosophy of students teaching students in a pay-as-you-go atmosphere emphasizing self-defense produces alert, aware citizens, sometimes stripped of their stereos, their Nikes, their bedding—and always their illusions!" Nestled deep in prime smelter country near Gary, Indiana, the sprawling and newly radon-free underground campus has been lauded as "an advanced rodent-control lab in itself."

College of the Antarctic—"Too much talk about the weather"; "Other people's breathing gets on my nerves"; "A learning environment where even sleep can be fatal." C. of A. students are notoriously thin-skinned gripers, but everybody loves the daily rum tot and hands-on courses like the History of Fire. Academic credit is given just for getting there—but don't say it's easy till you've tried!

Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands Perpetual College—The famous Lowlands "low road to learning" aims, quite simply, at emptying the mind. To this end, it exists only as improvisational dance on a beach near Bolinas, California, and utilizes a multifaceted, nondisciplined, matrix-modelled untasked approach to human integrational imperatives in a post-feminist, pre-holistic context. Lowlands students do not "start" or "finish" their studies, no degrees are given, and imaginative costume is encouraged. Tuition is $98,000 (nonrefundable).

Canal Zone Polytech—"Dedicated to the belief that licensed air-conditioning repairmen hold the key to the future of the globe's interior climate," read the signs on CAZOP's service vans, yet its motto—*Vox bacculus hic vadis in vitrio jubiliam*, "The road goes on forever and the party never ends"—bespeaks both arduous study and plentiful opportunity for students to kick back and let off freon.

Arkansas State College of Porcine Science—Not just another aggie school. At Soo-wee U., hog husbandry supplies the framework for an educational experience as bucolic as it is rural, where qualified (you must provide proof of at least two parents) sons of the soil and farmers' daughters alike can pig out on a pork-rich scholastic diet in a laid-back barnyard campus, sport with farm animals, or hitchhike into nearby Gooneysburg to pick up comic books and maybe a hot dog. Arkansas State College of Porcine Science: It's more than your gateway to the feeding trough of life. It *is* the feeding trough of life.



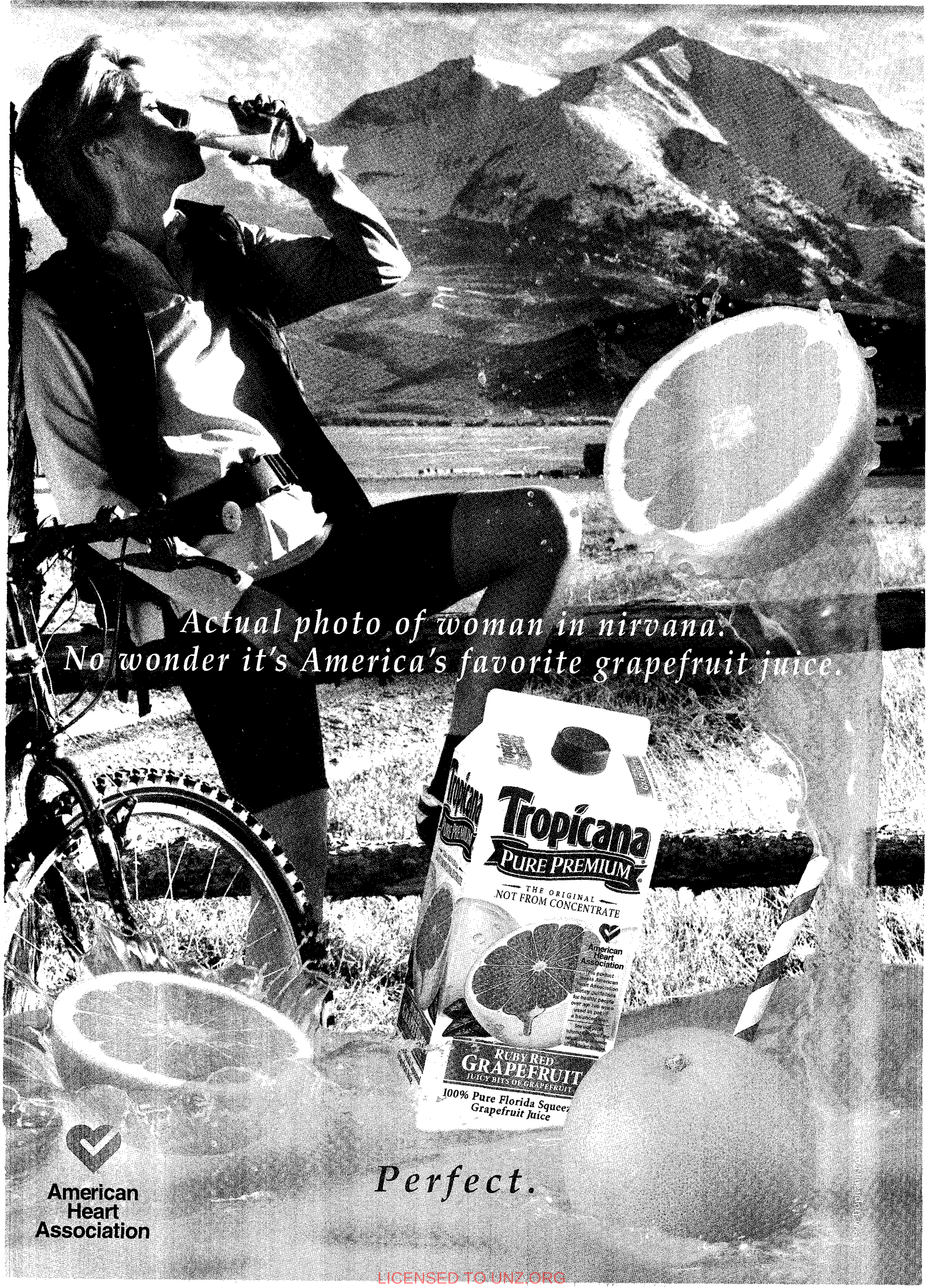
Runciman University (Tirana Campus)—"A day in Albania is like a year in Buffalo!" Overseas study, where even friends become strangers but the police always know your name, is an *adventure*. "The one-dollar tuition is offset by no classes," grumps one ex-undergrad, but another exults, "I learned survival!" Campus activities center on the all-marble, forty-five-story Enver Hoxha Taxidermy Institute, at last report still standing.

Megastate—With the former city of Lincoln, Nebraska, as its campus, the advice of Megastate's student newspaper (circulation 400,000) to "join the home-built airplane club, *quick*" makes sense. Don't be intimidated by the fact that no one has ever graduated. The near hundred-per-cent annual attrition rate makes acceptance likelier than you might think.

Wamble College of Scripture—The average Wamble student has had four nervous breakdowns, prolonged bed-wetting, and at least one personal encounter with Satan. If handling snakes and scourging the flesh while renouncing fancy underwear is your idea of preparation for a life spent burning down the Devil-tainted dwellings of fornicating good-time Charlies to rid this world of sin, then pray for a plague of sulfur-breathing dragons, for you are the wretched victim of Pride and must enroll in Wamble's six-year Redemptionary Program or "smolder in Hell until the Horned One again appears on this earth."

Plankton University—From the moment you fill out your application on the inside of the matchbook cover until the fax beeps to signal that your diploma has arrived, a Plankton education won't take up much of anyone's time. Doyenne of South Carolina's so-called Poison Ivy League, Plankton—founded in 1697 as a tannery and licensed as a college in 1986—has admittedly seen its professorial ranks decimated by a ruthless policy of publish or perish, while A.M.A. harassment shut down its lucrative medical school and a "Sixty Minutes" "Drug-Lord Chancellor" segment dried up the alumni fund overnight. But students today rate cafeteria food "edible," more than eighty per cent of the faculty has volunteered for rehab, and the brucellosis scare is—for the time being, at least—over at last. ♦

JOHN O'BRIEN



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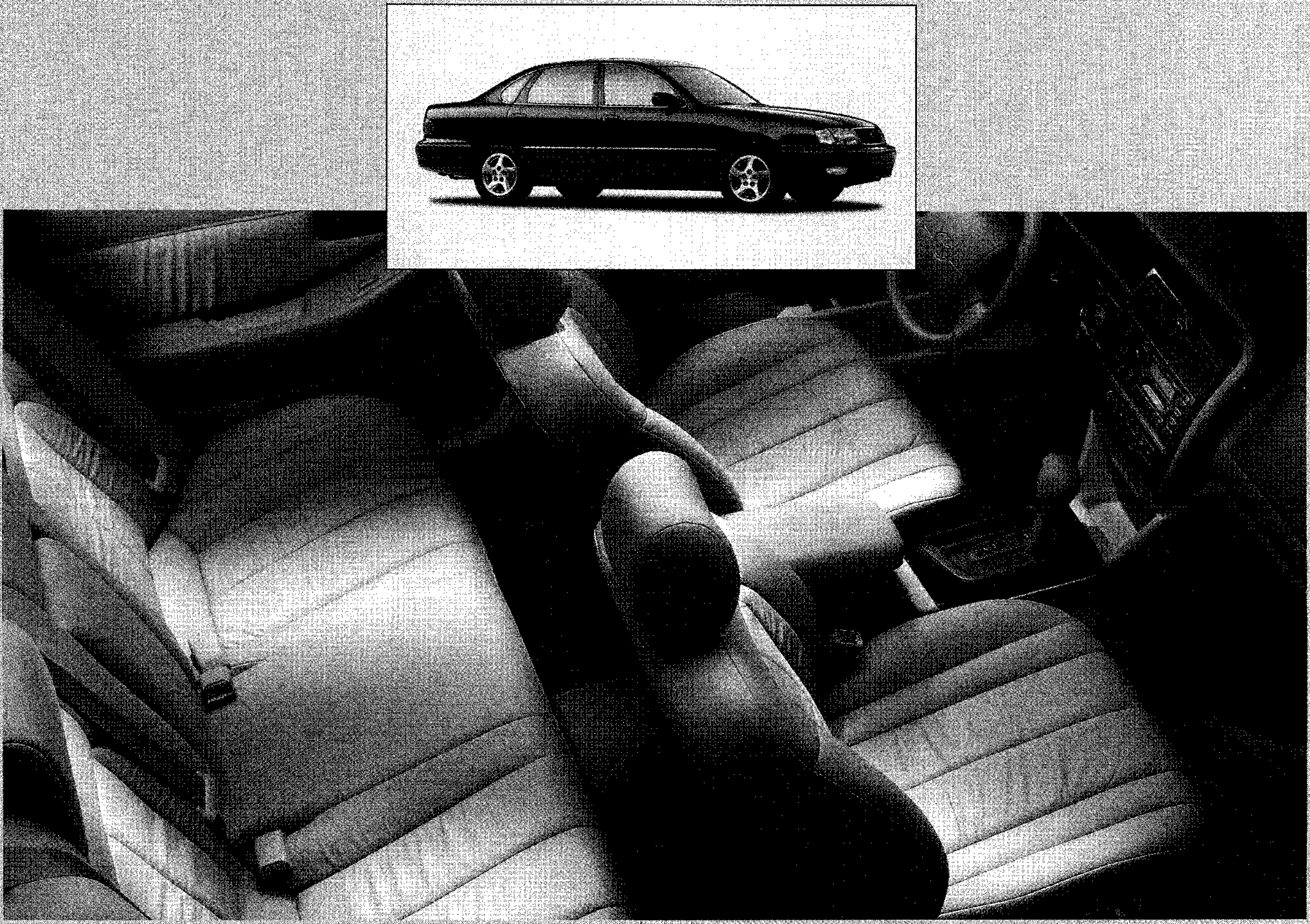
AVALON

oh, the joys of solitary confinement.

Settle in. And settle down. Then feel the space around you embrace, comfort and ease both body and soul. Before you know it, your entire being has just breathed a collective sigh of relief. And to think, you have yet to make it halfway home.



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